

RAND PAUL REVOLUTION ■ HOW OBAMA LOST THE LEFT ■ TARGET: YEMEN

MARCH 2010

# The American Conservative

## HIS PANIC

### The Myth of Immigrant Crime

By Ron Unz

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**"KNOCKED IT OUT OF THE PARK!"**

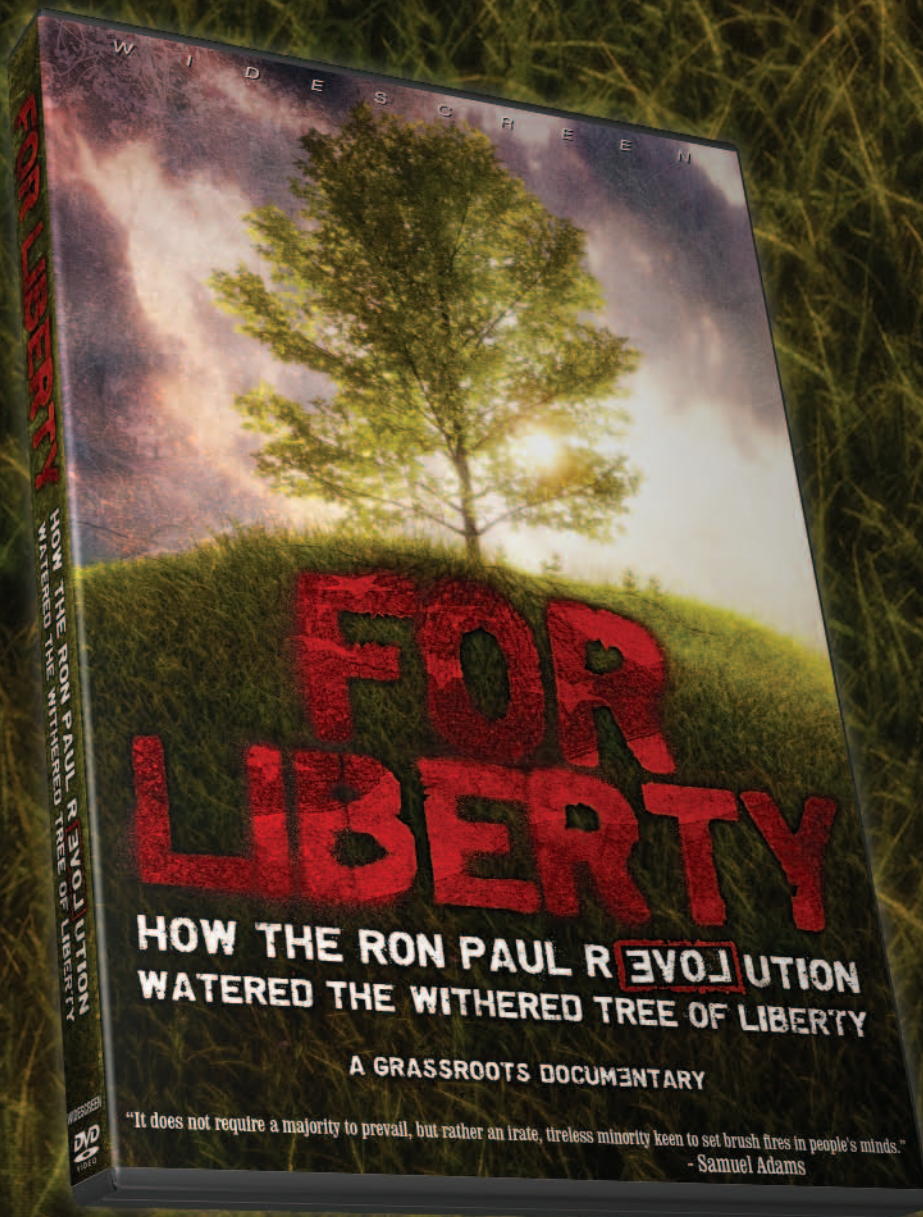
- THOMAS WOODS, PhD, AUTHOR *MELTDOWN*

**"...DOCUMENTS THE ONLY 2008 CAMPAIGN BASED  
ON ACTUAL IDEAS AND REAL 'CHANGE'."**

- JACK HUNTER, AKA THE SOUTHERN AVENGER

**"A STUNNING DOCUMENTARY WORTHY OF THOMAS PAINE  
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- DOUG WEAD, PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIAN & AUTHOR



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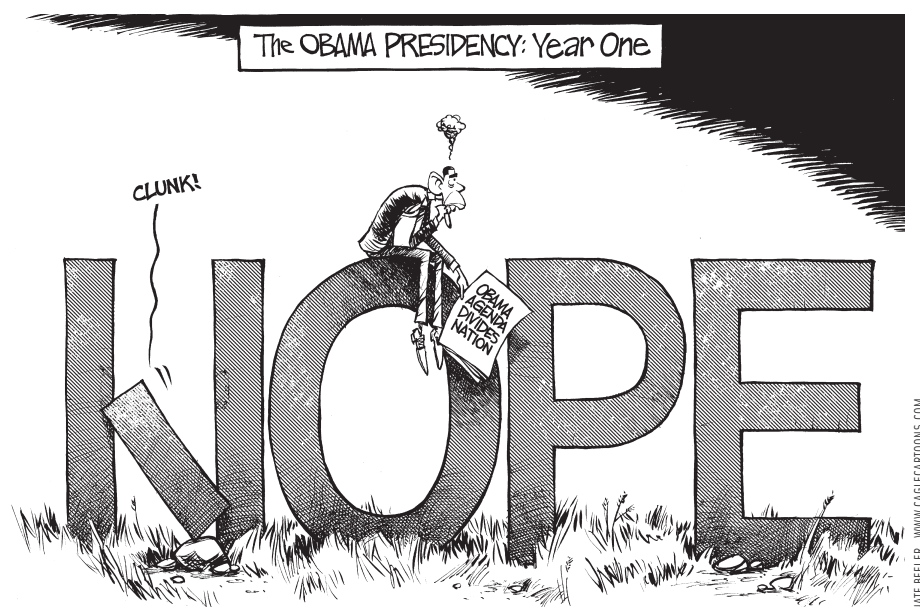
## BAY STATE RUNS RED

The rebellion calls Americans back to their earliest memories of independence. Tea parties. Revolution. Dethroning a king—or at least, seizing the Senate seat long held by a Kennedy. Republican Scott Brown rode to victory in the Massachusetts on a wave of resentment against Obama, Pelosi, and their plans to make us all serfs of the medical-industrial complex (even more than we already are). The right-wing blogosphere rang with hosannas: Democrats lost their Senate supermajority, the bluest state just turned red, and soon we're going to party like it's 1994.

Only one problem with that: Scott Brown. Far from being a budget-slashing, morally righteous, politically savvy paragon of the Right, he's what used to be called a Rockefeller Republican. He's a social liberal—pro-choice and a fan of civil unions. On the campaign trail, he roared in outrage at the thought of cutting Medicare, the socialized medicine we already have that is rapidly bankrupting the country. He may or may not be against Obamacare, but in the Bay State he's for Romneycare, a distinction with nary a difference.

And he's pro-war and anti-civil liberties, a Dick Cheney Republican on foreign policy and national security. Brown is exactly the sort of politician whose domestic policies alienated the Right during the Bush years and whose inept warmongering cost the GOP control of Congress and the White House. In reacting against Barack Obama, Massachusetts has only affirmed his predecessor.

This is not what the tea parties should be about. But in politics the unwary are always in danger of getting snookered—just look at how the revolution of '94 turned out and how little the conservative agenda advanced when Republicans controlled the House, Senate, and White House. If the mistakes of the past



are not to be repeated, conservatives will have to put not their faith in partisan princes like Scott Brown, but in the first principles of such bygone heroes as Robert A. Taft.

[CULTURE]

## A STAR IS BORN

Scott Brown popping out of his cake wasn't quite how President Obama would have chosen to celebrate his first year in office. But he might find comfort in "Hope—The Obama Musical," now playing in Frankfurt, Germany. While his polls plummet at home, he can still pack the Jahrhunderthalles's 2,000 seats.

The catchy score features such sure-fire hits as "Yes We Can!" and "Soccer Mom Pitbull." Like that heavenly host arrayed around the first messiah's manger, the cast of 30 sings, "Celebrate! Celebrate! Around the world every nation celebrate!" in honor of Obama's historic election.

Playwright Randall Hutchins, an American living in Germany, boasts that his masterpiece features many lines from actual campaign speeches—though the John McCain character doesn't reprise his famed rendition of "Bomb, Bomb Iran." Even Jeremiah Wright makes an appearance, if disappointingly in a benign gospel number rather than a

duet with Louis Farrakhan.

Sarah Palin is there, fronting a bevy of barely clad dancers. The same actress inexplicably plays Hillary. ("I know what to do! I am a Clinton too!") Apparently female impediments to the Superstar's rise are interchangeable.

But it's his leading lady who nearly steals the show. A cardigan-clad Barack charms Michelle with lyrics fit for a kindergarten valentine: "I think we fit together like a hand inside a glove—I know this is no ordinary love." When she's plagued by doubts about her fitness to be First Lady (remember, it's a play), Michelle's mother warbles, "You were chosen for this time, walk in your glory. Think like a queen, for you are royalty." It seems to have worked.

Thankfully, the president won't have to haul his queen to Germany to hear her stage self proclaim, "I see the leader deep inside, so strong, confident and wise." An American tour is in the works. But it's probably a good bet that producers aren't looking to book Boston venues.

[WORLD]

## AFTERSHOCK & AWE

The earthquake in Haiti, which left 200,000 dead and 2 million homeless, prompted outpourings of charity from around the world—and calls for nation-

building from neoconservatives. “The U.S. response ... offers opportunities to re-shape Haiti’s long-dysfunctional government and economy as well as to improve the public image of the United States in the region,” Jim Roberts of the Heritage Foundation enthused. “While on the ground in Haiti, the U.S. military can also interrupt the nightly flights of cocaine to Haiti.” In other words, it’s a good time to start a war. What could better help Haitians get over a natural disaster than adding a manmade one on top of it?

Sixteen years ago, when President Bill Clinton attempted nation-building in Haiti, Lawrence Di Rita—later a Rumsfeld deputy, but then a deputy director of foreign policy and defense studies for Heritage—called it a “new venture into liberal colonialism.” He was right. Too bad Heritage today is all for neocon colonialism.

But then again, the Haitians might not mind. As American troops took up positions at the presidential palace, one local told the AP, “We are happy they are coming because we have so many problems. If they want, they can stay longer than in 1915,” when the U.S. occupied the country for 19 years.

#### [IDEOLOGY]

### BRING YOUR BEST PEOPLE

CIA Director Leon Panetta was quick to say that the deaths of seven CIA agents in Afghanistan on Dec. 30 didn’t result from a failure of tradecraft. But by what best practices did the Agency allow an asset of dubious provenance to be ushered, without security screening, onto a Forward Operation Base? By what classified method did they assemble a crowd of senior officers for his suicide-bombing convenience?

The Jordanians who played matchmaker claimed that Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, a resident of Zarqa—a known *jihadi* hotbed—had been

“deradicalized,” which means they put him in prison and turned the screws until he agreed to play along. The plan was simple: because Balawi was a physician, he should be able to cozy up to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian doctor who is al-Qaeda’s second-in-command.

Problem is, the mindset that enabled Balawi’s deadly mission is also simple—dangerously so. We’re the good guys, they’re the bad guys. Because of the benevolence of our mission—pay no attention to the drones—the locals will eventually be drawn to the light of democracy and literacy for all. That a man might be more motivated by ancient tensions and hidden loyalties didn’t fit the storyline. The neocon narrative is about universal ideals, not local culture and custom.

One expects this sort of naïveté from Beltway bombardiers but not from seasoned intelligence professionals, theoretically unblinkered by ideology. During the Cold War, the Agency saw itself pitted against a formidable opponent and played a decades-long chess match. Careers were made by anticipating the enemy’s moves: the presumption was that the Soviets, however ruthless, were rational.

We afford our current enemies much less respect, a position that imperils us far more than it damages them. Thus we’re pouring another 30,000 lives into the maw, certain that victory will be at hand if we can just shake a few more crazies from their caves. But as veteran foreign correspondent Georgie Anne Geyer writes, “[The] attack was a dire warning and goes beyond the immediate tragedy. If our very best intelligence agents could not recognize the realities surrounding this rather simple-to-analyze killer, it is difficult to figure out how they can analyze the immense and dire complexities behind this conflict.” ■

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# Soft Targets

Add Yemen to America's long list of easy enemies.

By Mark Ames

IF THE LAST FEW DECADES prove anything about America's strategy in fighting Islamic terrorism, it's that no matter what the other side throws our way, America will respond in the most counterintuitive and self-destructive manner imaginable.

The routine goes something like this: if America is attacked by terrorists from Country A, then our response will be to bomb the hell out of Country Z, in which Z equals a doormat of a country whose sole purpose is to provide an easy, morale-boosting win. This strategy has produced mixed results, from total failure to complete catastrophe, depending on variable Z. The doormats have turned out to be booby-trapped.

Take our most recent example of this counterterror formula: a terrorist from Country A (Nigeria) tries and fails to down an American plane. According to the warped logic of the U.S. foreign-policy establishment, we must naturally attack Country Z—Yemen. Leaving aside the question of how effective it is to bomb any demographically-exploding Third World country, let's follow the hawkish logic: some misfit can't figure out how to blow up his underwear, but we still have to find perpetrators to punish. Problem is, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab is from Nigeria, which has almost 80 million Muslims, the largest number in sub-Saharan Africa. So that's not going to work. There's Saudi Arabia, where al-Qaeda's founder, its sponsors, and its ideological support all come from—that would be a logical Country A to bomb. But the Saudis sponsor the

American foreign-policy establishment at least as much as they sponsor anti-American terrorism, so bombing them would be tantamount to suicide for our policy-makers. Then there's Pakistan, another logical choice: that country's notorious spy service is believed to have been protecting al-Qaeda's leadership for these many years—why not bomb Pakistan? Answer: we're already fighting, and losing, against a Pakistani proxy army, the Taliban. Just imagine how much worse things would be if we expanded the conflict to Pakistan proper, which has over five times the population of Afghanistan and nuclear weapons to boot.

Yet the simple-minded hawks need to invade and bomb someone, just so long as it's someone they believe will be a pushover; an easy victory where the results are all but fixed in advance; some country that could play the military equivalent of the Washington Generals to America's Harlem Globetrotters.

That's how Yemen, a place Abdulmutallab passed through and supposedly got his training in, becomes the new Country Z—the tangentially related state we need to bomb to make things better. As far as the meatheads in D.C. know, Yemen should be a pushover. Otherwise, we'd have heard something about Yemen by now.

Ah yes, lovely Yemen, the perfect choice for another open-ended war, exactly what the bankrupt, overstretched, kneecapped American empire needs. It's the sort of counterintuitive target the counterintuitive imperialists who have brought us so much ruin would choose

for their last gamble: it's as if they selected Yemen precisely because there's nothing to steal and nothing to conquer. The only thing a war with Yemen would guarantee is more death, more debt, and generations of anti-American hate to keep our grandchildren busy. To the serial losers who coaxed America into the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the losing odds Yemen offers are just too tempting to pass up.

So Sen. Joseph Lieberman goes on television and says, "Iraq was yesterday's war. ... Afghanistan is today's war. If we don't act pre-emptively, Yemen will be tomorrow's war. That's the danger we face." This sums up just how deranged America's hawks have become. To their minds, wars come in three tenses: past, present, and future. Leaving aside the fact that Afghanistan was yesterday's war before it became today's war and that America is still losing both wars in whichever tense Lieberman uses, consider his argument: I gambled American power on Iraq, and I lost; I'm now in the process of losing another war. Therefore, if we don't want to lose the next war, we need to start it now—to trick time, so to speak, so that we can fight the future in the present tense.

No wonder American power is collapsing harder than just about any empire in history. But it's not as though Lieberman is displaying any originality. The politicians and wonks leading America down the drain are following a logic that's been operating for the past three and a half decades, always with disastrous results. It hasn't mattered

whether the controls of the U.S. war machine were in the hands of a peanut farmer or a washed-up actor, a rich white chickenhawk or a socialist of color, America's military strategy vis-à-vis Islamic terrorism knows no party line—or common sense.

Just look at the record. In 1975, America was smarting from defeat in Vietnam, Gerald Ford was president, and a couple of “bold-thinking” hotheads in his administration had a brilliant idea for how to restore America's confidence. As luck would have it, Cambodia, one of the world's poorest countries, then in the middle of a Khmer Rouge holocaust, offered itself as Country Z. Cambodian Communists seized a U.S. merchant boat, the *Mayaguez*, and briefly held the crew hostage. Rather than negotiating for their release, Ford's defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and his underling Dick Cheney pushed for a massive military “rescue operation.” It was a disaster: some 40 American servicemen were killed in the attempt to take control of the island where our sailors were supposedly being held. In fact, the Americans had already been released before the operation started.

In 1983, Hezbollah suicide bombers killed 220 Marines, the worst death toll the service has suffered since the battle of Iwo Jima and perhaps the most pointless mass-death of Marines in the outfit's brilliant history. Reagan's response: invade Grenada, a resort island a few miles off of Florida. In his defense, at least he didn't invade Iraq or Afghanistan, but the basic policy of reacting to terrorism by invading some other “cakewalk” country was set.

Also on Reagan's watch, Iranian-backed militants in Lebanon kidnapped American citizens and twice blew up the U.S. Embassy. His response: send the Ayatollah a birthday cake and a Bible, along with shiploads of TOW antitank weapons to help Khomeini fight Iraq.

Still, something had to be done for public consumption, given all the Americans that the Iranians was killing. So Reagan chose to pick on Col. Muammar Qaddafi, the Gary Numan of scary Muslim villains. He bombed Qaddafi's tents and killed the cross-dresser's 4-year-old daughter.

The last terror attack of the Reagan era came just a few weeks before the 40th president left the White House, when a Pan Am jet was blown up over Scotland. Everyone and his grandma knew that the Iranians and their Syrian proxies were retaliating for the *USS Vincennes* shooting down an Iranian passenger jet in the Persian Gulf a few months earlier. But guess who George H.W. Bush, Reagan's replacement, blamed the Pan Am explosion on? “Glass Jaw” Qaddafi. Unlike the Iranians, Qaddafi could be counted on to

someplace like Bhutan or Upper Volta, though I'm sure policy planners considered it. By the time of the Kenya and Tanzania embassy bombings in 1998, Clinton couldn't hold back, so naturally he destroyed a Sudanese aspirin plant and put on a harmless though expensive fireworks show in Afghanistan.

Under George W. Bush, America's asymmetrical strategy went off the scale: Saudis, Kuwaitis, and Egyptians trained in Afghanistan and commanded by a Pakistani attacked America with airplanes, and we responded with a catastrophic invasion of Iraq. Operations in Afghanistan became a sideshow to the main event in Mesopotamia. And, as it turns out, right after 9/11 our ultra-hawks considered opening an even more illogical front: a top-secret memo cited in the 9/11 Commission Report—apparently written by Under Secretary of Defense

## AMERICA WAS SOBERED UP BY THE EXPERIENCE AND **DECIDED NOT TO BOMB UPPER VOLTA**, THOUGH I'M SURE **POLICY PLANNERS CONSIDERED IT**.

cave and cry uncle, even when he wasn't guilty. He handed over one of his agents for a show trial in Scotland, and as if it were part of the deal, that Libyan agent was released a few years later by British authorities because he wasn't feeling well, or something like that.

Then there was Clinton. In 1993, proto-al-Qaeda terrorists led and funded by Saudi Wahhabis tried blowing up the World Trade Center with van-bombs. Clinton's response: roast a bunch of American Kool-Aid drinkers in Waco, Texas. (The implication is that Texans are the Libyans of North America, all bark and no bite.) In October 1993, Somali terrorists humiliated American forces in the worst military disaster since the 1983 Lebanon barracks bombing. Briefly, America was sobered up by the experience and decided not to bomb

Douglas Feith for Donald Rumsfeld—urged “hitting targets outside the Middle East in the initial offensive,” including Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. The report notes, “The author suggested ... since U.S. attacks were expected in Afghanistan, an American attack in South America or Southeast Asia might be a surprise to the terrorists”—not to mention a shocker to any member of the reality-based community.

Which brings us to the Nigerian underwear bomber and 2010's pending war in Yemen. It doesn't take a genius to see how this will end up. It's just too bad that we're the ones picking up the tab for Lieberman and company's mad misdirection. ■

*Mark Ames is the author of The eXile: Sex, Drugs, and Libel in the New Russia.*

# Busting the Safety Net

The economic crisis hastens an entitlement crash.

By Charles Hugh Smith

THREE DECADES AGO, angst over the looming insolvency of Social Security reached fever pitch. President Ronald Reagan responded by grasping the third rail of American politics long enough to add decades to the entitlement's solvency by increasing the taxes employers and employees paid and by incrementally extending the age of retirement from 65 to 67.

In the years since, the sprawling Medicare/Medicaid system has replaced Social Security as the emblem of impoverished entitlements. Despite duly repeated warnings that the program is unsustainable—or perhaps as a result of those constant cries of “wolf!”—we have become numb to the peril. The entitlement train that has been a mere smudge on the horizon for years is now approaching the cliff of insolvency at high speed.

Face the figures. In 1980, the federal budget was \$590 billion. This fiscal year, federal expenditures are estimated at \$3.5 trillion. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator, \$100 in 1980 is the equivalent of \$260 today. So if federal outlays had risen at the rate of inflation, the federal budget would be about \$1.5 trillion today, not \$3.5 trillion. How did we pile on \$2 trillion above inflation?

Start by looking at Medicare/Medicaid. The former entitles those 65 and older (45 million) to government-funded healthcare; the latter guarantees care to disabled and low-income Americans (49 million).

Medicare was a wee lad of only \$52 billion back in the early 1980s;

Medicare/Medicaid will together consume \$821 billion in fiscal 2010—and that's not counting the 50 states' share of the Medicaid tab. (Here is a “no wonder we are all numb” tidbit: the official 2010 budget for both programs is “only” \$743 billion, but \$78 billion of the \$787 billion stimulus was a giveaway to the states to help offset their portion of Medicaid costs. The program is busily bankrupting states, too.)

Official projections claim that elder brother Social Security will remain solvent until the politically benign date of 2037. Unfortunately for the program's bean counters, the Great Recession has trimmed revenues even as it has driven hordes of people to retire early at 62 rather than wait for full benefits. As a result, outlays are soaring: monthly benefits were \$56.6 billion in September 2009, up from \$51.5 in 2008, a staggering 10 percent increase in a single year.

Meanwhile, revenues have slipped into the negative column. Yes, the Social Security cash cow is dying. In 2007, the system generated a surplus of \$191 billion; based on current trends, that surplus will be gone by 2011 or 2012, six years earlier than the program's June 2009 trustees' forecast.

The short answer to why our entitlement system is collapsing so quickly is the metaphorical “pig in the python”—that demographic bulge of 78 million citizens called the Baby Boom. With the first Boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964 by most accounts—eligible for Medicare next year, that pro-

gram's beneficiary count will rise 50 percent in the next decade, from 45 million today to over 67 million by 2020.

Even if the costs per beneficiary remain static, that influx of wards will boost costs by 50 percent. And unfortunately, decades of data suggest that costs per beneficiary will continue rising by about 7 percent per year. Repeated “reforms” have done little but slow the rate of acceleration.

One favorite way of dealing with politically inconvenient projections is to fudge the numbers to let the current crop of politicians off the hook. This tactic has added to the nation's self-hypnosis, offering bright projections of future growth (“we're going to grow our way out of this”) and unrealistically low estimates of future entitlement expenses.

Even the Reagan-era reform of Social Security relied on the bureaucratic leg-dormancy of the Boskin Commission, which rejiggered the methodology for calculating the Consumer Price Index. Consider the wizardry of “hedonic adjustments”: though the price of a new car rose from \$6,847 in 1979 to \$27,940 in 2004, after the hedonic adjustment is applied—cars are a lot better quality now, etc.—\$6,847 in 1979 is only \$11,708 in 2004 dollars. This artificially dropped the cost of living adjustments built into Social Security, thus lowering the overall program costs by 1 percent a year—over time, a hefty sum.

While the CPI will remain ground for mind-numbing debate until Doomsday, government agencies have a long and well-documented history of underesti-



inating expenses and overestimating growth in tax receipts. Congressional Budget Office projections of 2009 Medicare costs were about 9 percent short of actual costs, for example, and various agency projections of GDP growth remaining between 3 and 4.6 percent in the decades ahead now look unrealistically optimistic.

In other words, federal green-eye-shaders are assuring us that if GDP grows by 782 percent in the next few years, it's "no worries, mate."

That may be a slight exaggeration, but the hope of outracing the entitlement train by growing an overleveraged and heavily indebted \$13 trillion economy at 4.6 percent a year for decades to come is fantasy. The more likely scenario is that the U.S. will remain in a Japan-like stagnation for the next decade, with flat GDP and tax revenues as trillions of dollars in speculative bad debts are slowly written off.

The fantasy also runs counter to demographics: Baby Boomers, long the mainstay of income tax revenues, will switch from being ATM's for the IRS to beneficiaries of government largesse. And there is little evidence that tens of millions of new jobs will be created to fund 78 million Boomers' 30-year passage through the entitlement python.

Despite various magical thinking mantras ("biofuels, biofuels, biofuels"), there are few drivers of job growth to replace the busted bubble-era industries—construction and finance—and an environment of higher taxes and health-care costs isn't exactly propitious for small business. Little wonder, then, that the federal deficit is expected to remain above \$1 trillion a year for the foreseeable future (unless you plug in that magical 782 percent rise in GDP, of course).

Back in the real world, tax revenues dropped 7 percent in December, even though the economy was supposedly growing at a 2.2 percent clip, and the

Medicare/Medicaid budget has exploded from \$595 billion in 2008 to \$743 billion a mere two years later, dwarfing both Social Security (\$695 billion) and the Defense Department (\$663 billion). Did anyone notice that many of the long-term unemployed who exhausted their unemployment benefits now qualify for Medicaid?

The current leadership's plan is to fill the \$1.5 trillion gap between tax revenues and expenditures with borrowed money, but many observers doubt that incantations of fiscal responsibility will induce the bond market to fund endless trillion-dollar deficits at near-zero yields. Which brings us back to a key driver of those deficits: healthcare costs.

The U.S. spends over 16 percent of its GDP on healthcare, 60 percent more than Germany and double what aging Japan devotes. (Thirty years ago, healthcare absorbed 8 percent of America's GDP.) Per capita the U.S. spends more than double what Australia and Sweden spend on healthcare—almost \$7,300 per citizen, far outpacing oil-rich Norway, a distant second globally at \$4,760 per citizen. Despite spending twice as much on healthcare as England, studies show that Americans are considerably less healthy than their English counterparts.

In other words, it isn't just the federal healthcare programs that are bankrupting the nation, it's the entire healthcare system. Where did we go wrong?

If we clear away the canards and excuses, what we have is a system of utterly perverse incentives. The system gives patients no motive to pay attention to costs and providers every incentive to pad the bill. As for quality care, there are no incentives for that either. Studies have shown that poor medical practices actually net providers more money. According to a recent report, only 3 percent of the millions of fee-for-service charges submitted to Medicare are reviewed, and over 10 percent of

Medicare's \$453 billion annual expenditures are outright fraud.

As the system now works (or doesn't), the total cost of a procedure isn't provided beforehand to enable cost comparisons. It's akin to taking your car to an auto mechanic and agreeing to pay for whatever services the garage deems necessary, with no penalties if the service is poor. Medicare just paid \$2,000 for my 80-year-old mom to sit in a waiting room for a few moments prior to my picking her up. It was called a "recovery room" for billing purposes, but my physician sources say a recovery room is only for patients coming out of general anesthesia, and my mom had only local anesthetic on one of her toes.

Lack of transparency, no incentives for patients to skip unnecessary procedures or choose the lowest-cost service, every reason for providers to tack on questionable charges—the system is broken at the most fundamental level. The "healthcare reform" bill grinding through Congress does little to address these ills, and in a perfection of perversity will add at least \$1 trillion over the next decade to U.S. healthcare costs that already outstrip every other nation's medical expenditures.

Spending our way out of insolvency is not possible. The trends in demographics, healthcare, tax revenues, and entitlement outlays lead to an impossible end: 50 percent of the federal budget will be devoted to Medicare/Medicaid alone by 2020.

The ironic hope is that by accelerating the entitlement train toward the cliff of insolvency, the current facsimile of "healthcare reform" may hasten real change. ■

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*Charles Hugh Smith writes the Of Two Minds blog ([www.oftwominds.com](http://www.oftwominds.com)) and is the author of numerous books, most recently Survival+: Structuring Prosperity for Yourself and the Nation.*

# Rand Paul Revolution

Can a libertarian ride Tea Party disaffection to victory in a Republican primary?

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

HERE'S ONE difference between Rand Paul and papa Ron Paul, says mama Carol Paul: her son is funny on stage.

"Ron doesn't do that—he doesn't tell jokes," Mrs. Paul says of her husband of 53 years. She recalls a lively speech Rand made for his dad in New Hampshire on the 2008 presidential campaign trail. "He was so personable—it tickled me to death."

Jokes aside, there are few obvious differences between Rand Paul, 47, and his dad, 74, who has become an unconventional political celebrity in his golden years. So Rand Paul, now embarking on a promising Republican primary campaign for U.S. Senate in Kentucky, finds himself charged with a complicated mission—convincing voters he is a good old bluegrass conservative Republican while maintaining the goodwill of his libertarian rebel base.

"It's threading a needle," says Scott Lasley, a professor of American politics at Western Kentucky University, "between what Rand Paul needs to do to win and where a lot of his base support is coming from. It's going to be interesting to see how that plays out."

But the younger Paul is clear-eyed. Though he entered the race in August—to the chagrin of Kentucky Republicans who had already handpicked Secretary of State Trey Grayson to succeed retiring Sen. Jim Bunning—it isn't as though he decided to take up politics yesterday.

"I've had it in my blood," Paul tells *TAC*, recalling how, at age 10, he would

listen raptly to his father's radio interviews. An obstetrician who moved his growing family—Rand is the middle of five—to Texas in the 1960s, Ron Paul was convinced that government spending had led to the growing monetary crisis. He lost his first congressional bid in 1974, but captured the 22nd District seat in 1978 and has served in Congress a total of 21 years.

"In 1984, I gave my first speech for [my father]," Rand recalls. "When I was 21, before 300 people, I debated [then Texas congressman] Phil Gramm." The elder Paul, who was running against Gramm for an open Senate seat, let young Rand stand in during debates for which Ron had a conflict with House votes. By all accounts, he held his own.

Rand Paul has spent the last 15 years as founder and chairman of Kentucky Taxpayers United, a state legislative watchdog group. It wasn't his first experience in the anti-tax movement, said Carol Paul, recalling his leadership in a similar organization while attending classes at Duke University School of Medicine in North Carolina. "He was vitally interested in [tax issues]" and trying to shake things up, she laughs. "I said, 'Are you sure you are in school?'"

He was. Like his dad and two siblings, he became a doctor, an eye surgeon. He married Kelley Ashby and settled in Bowling Green in 1993, where they are raising three sons, aged 16, 13, and 10. All helped Grandpa Paul run for president, with Rand traveling with the cam-

paigned and speaking in at least 10 states.

"In so many ways, I have been practicing for this for 17 or 18 years," Paul notes. "My wife had been telling me to wait until I was 55 and the kids were in college." But fate stepped in when Bunning, who "had seen his political star fade" according to the *Washington Post*, finally caved to the "unsubtle campaign" by Republican leaders, including senior Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, to retire before he lost the seat outright. But the Kentucky squires overlooked a few factors.

First came the Tea Party movement, which effectively harnessed the anti-Washington outrage coursing through the degraded GOP base. And they hadn't counted on Rand Paul—whose father was the only Republican to come out of the 2008 devastation a winner and who carries the right measure of camaraderie with these disaffected voters—choosing this moment to stick his toe in the political waters.

Jesse Benton, who handled communications for Ron Paul's presidential campaign, now serves as a senior adviser to Rand Paul. "Here you have someone with the intellectual underpinnings, the proper motivation ... and really special times," Benton offers. "You've got the mainstream establishment reeling and having a real credibility gap right now. Then you have Rand with the family name and credentials." The stars, he says, are truly aligned.

"It's going to be one of those years



where almost anything can happen,” says Terry Madonna, a pollster and political analyst for Franklin & Marshall College in Pennsylvania. “McConnell and these mainstream Republicans ... they are really going to have their political skills tested. ... They might hold the party together, but the real test is what the voters do.”

It's important to understand who these voters are. Rand Paul seems to know, having worked on the periphery of Kentucky politics for nearly two decades. On one hand, he advances a libertarian intellectual framework, nurtured in a household where Hayek, Ayn Rand, and von Mises were familiar names. His service on his dad's campaign wasn't just the indulgence of a dutiful son, he brought the energy of an activist. (Post-campaign, the Paul movement has become institutionalized as the Campaign for Liberty, which at one point raised over \$6 million in one day from individual donations.) Rand speaks of an “American rabble” that is “bereaved at the loss of liberty,” that “wants an end to the imperial presidency” and empire-building abroad, and that aims to strip the federal budget down to its constitutionally enumerated functions.

But like his father, Rand Paul is a Republican—since 1976, he says—and he knows his chances in the May primary partly depend on how well he convinces county chairs and local Republicans that he identifies with their issues and mores. He has to, for Kentucky has closed primaries. Only registered Republicans can vote on May 18, and party switchers had to re-register by Jan. 1. Registered independents and Democrats who might be inclined to support Paul as the primary approaches are already too late.

“In order to win, I think he needs to get to know the party activists and the people who have been involved in the party politics for a long time because

those are the people who are going to vote,” says Nathan Gonzales of the Washington-based *Rothenberg Political Report*, an established political handicapper. If not, “I don't think he is going to bring in enough new Republican voters to win.”

Therein lies the double-bind for Rand Paul, and it may very well highlight the internecine fissures within the GOP—within conservatism itself—like no other election this year. First, Paul has to work the system he and the burgeoning national base of anti-government rabble-rousers behind him have openly eschewed. But then, he must deal with competing ideological factions within

PAUL HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO EMPHASIZE THAT HE IS A “**CONSTITUTIONAL CONSERVATIVE**” AND A **REPUBLICAN**, NOT A **PARTY LIBERTARIAN**—A POTENTIAL WEAKNESS THAT GRAYSON IS HOPING TO EXPLOIT.

his base—the loyal libertarians who brought his dad to national prominence and the Tea Partiers who don't naturally abide libertarian positions on war and civil liberties. On top of it all, Paul will have to live down criticism for riding his dad's coattails and for being an “outsider” who has raised most of his campaign funds—more than \$1.6 million—from outside Kentucky.

Rand Paul freely admits that without his famous father, he would not be able to launch a credible statewide campaign, having not held a high-profile office like his primary opponent, Trey Grayson, who is in his second term as secretary of state. That said, what he's tapping into as he travels across Kentucky is real. It's not all about cleaving to the party machine and being able to check all the boxes, he says. People are responding to the message of reform by sending new blood, even non-politicians, to Washington.

“I get nothing but nodding heads and people coming up to me saying, ‘You're absolutely right,’” Paul says, noting that after months of speeches and meet-and-greets throughout the state's 120 counties, he can sense not only a thaw, but a real chance for success. “I'm thinking we have an even-odds chance. When we started, I used to think we were 80-20, now I think we're 50-50.”

If Rand can win the primary, he faces better odds in the general. While Democrats enjoy a lopsided advantage in party registration in Kentucky, the state chose Republican John McCain over Barack Obama with 58 percent of the vote in 2008.

So Paul has been careful to emphasize that he is a “constitutional conservative” and a Republican, not a party Libertarian—a potential weakness that Grayson is hoping to exploit as the primary season gets hot.

The Kentucky political blogosphere pounced on a recent suggestion by Paul that as the new junior senator from Kentucky, he would not necessarily support Senator McConnell for GOP leader. Paul said in an interview with a local ABC affiliate, “I have to win the primary first. So I don't think I'd make a judgment on how I'd vote for leader.” Paul blamed the Grayson campaign for the resulting tempest, saying it distracted from all the positive things he said about McConnell in the interview. Nonetheless, since even in these times crossing the minority leader could be dangerous, Paul met privately with McConnell—who everyone thinks is supporting Grayson anyway—shortly

after the November kerfuffle. Illustrating his bind, however, one of Rand's key staffers resigned a month later, saying it was "morally necessary," because the candidate had forbidden his people from attacking the Republican Party and Senator McConnell.

"Rand now says he can't win by attacking McConnell," wrote Christie Gillespie, in a statement given to reporters. "Rand has changed his message of reform, so I cannot be further involved in this effort with a clear conscience. If we are not working to reform the GOP, we are only helping the establishment." She said she was subsequently quitting the GOP and joining the Libertarian Party.

Grayson, who spoke with *TAC*, says his opponent's biggest problem is getting away from the fringe image of the libertarians in his base. One of his supporters, Breahitt County GOP Chair Mike Bryant, started the website [www.tookookyforkentucky](http://www.tookookyforkentucky) to attack Paul on this front. Grayson says Rand is being forced to modify or nuance his positions on a number of key issues, from the war in Afghanistan to closing the Guantanamo Bay prison, to be more palatable to Kentucky's traditional conservative electorate.

Paul wants a "national debate" over whether the adversary in Afghanistan poses enough risk for us to justify staying. If so, he says, there should be a formal declaration of war. He ties the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the current debt crises. Grayson is likely to characterize this as a lack of support for the military, a strong presence in the state.

"He is a classic libertarian, and I am a classic conservative. From my standpoint, that will be helpful to me," Grayson tells *TAC*.

"I tell him good luck with that one," retorts Paul, noting that all recent polling has him catching if not passing Grayson. "We've spent the last six months defining who we are and letting

people know who he is, and we've already won that battle." Paul's team would rather the narrative reflect another primary drawing national attention: Tea Party darling Marco Rubio battling moderate Republican Charlie Crist for Senate in Florida.

Still, Paul readily admits he gets it from both sides. The Grayson campaign has accused Paul of flip-flopping on Guantanamo, first supporting the administration's plans to close it, then releasing a statement in November saying, "These thugs should stand before military tribunals and be kept off American soil." Unlike his father, Paul says he supports trying suspected terrorists in military courts—he does not believe foreign detainees are constitutionally protected—but he would "ultimately close [Gitmo] down."

That caused a rumble among libertarians who believed that Paul was selling out. They might also have a problem with his views on abortion. He believes it is a states' rights issue, but told *TAC* that he would support a federal ban on abortion if it came up in Congress,

which would put him in the good graces of the conservative Republican electorate in Kentucky.

And while his recent endorsement from Steve Forbes might pass muster with libertarians, it might raise their eyebrows that Paul admitted to "making overtures" to Sarah Palin for help campaigning in the state. (This probably makes sense since Paul estimates that 75 percent of his current base "didn't support Ron Paul" in 2008.)

"It's like we can't win on either side," Paul laughs, but he still sees a path to victory. "I think we just stay true to our positions," he says, citing plans for cleaning up the debt, balancing the budget, and passing term limits. He cites Ronald Reagan's adage, "the soul of conservatism is libertarianism" and avows that if libertarianism means hewing to the framework set by the Founding Fathers, "I'm all about that." The Republican Party, in not such distant memory, was all about that, too. ■

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## Goodnight Globe

A bedtime story from Thomas Friedman

WHILE STOPPING OVER AT the Kaliningrad airport on my way to Antibes from Almaty, I was recently asked a most remarkable question by Evgeny Malchik, executive vice president and crew chief of the McDonald's in Terminal 5. "Do you want fries with that?" It took a while for the true significance of this question to sink in. *Do you want fries with that?* In a plug and play world, soon we'll all be having fries.

Either that, or the fries will be having us.

Hold that thought. Point is, there is no corner of our lives that hasn't been impacted by what I like to call Globalization 3.0. Take tucking in your daughter at night, done the same way for generations. That is, until now. As Mike Duke, CEO of Wal-Mart told me, "Wal-Mart intends to become a world leader in tucking in children by 2014, or we just don't deserve to be the planet's biggest



retailer. Tucking in kids is a field we've neglected in the past, and not just because we used to lock our night workers in the store." *He gets it.*

Natalie, you as my daughter know about these developments better than anyone. So I'll address this to you.

Let me start by saying, Natalie, that I'm a little disappointed you haven't become a leader in green technology in this household. As I look around your bedroom, I see you haven't switched to biofuels and wind power the way Denmark did long ago. This is not sustainable. End of story. Full stop.

**YOU MIGHT SPEND A LITTLE LESS TIME POUTING NEXT TIME I FORGET YOUR BIRTHDAY ON ACCOUNT OF MY HAVING TO APPEAR ON "DAVOS-WOOD SQUARES" WITH WARREN CHRISTOPHER, BONO, HENRY KISSINGER, AND PHYLLIS DILLER.**

You see, in a flat world, we have options. Believe it or not, Natalie, your mother and I have been talking about replacing you and your sister with lower cost, lower carbon-footprint daughters from China and India. I like to call them Daughters 2.0. You can pick them up at the Shanghai airport, next to the Cinnabon in Terminal B. As usual, Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric, is ahead of the curve. He has three or four of these kids in each of his homes.

"Zheng, Jibao, and Pijiu are plug and play, no tuck-in required. Hate to say it, but they're twice as efficient as my American children," says Immelt. "All these insourced kids need is some Vitamin Water and a couple of soda crackers, and they're off assembling motherboards in the guest bedroom. These kids are green, they're sustainable, they're what GE needs to be in the 21st century." *He gets it, all right.*

So Natalie, what's your take-away here? You might move up the value chain by getting an engineering degree

instead of playing with that Dora the Explorer stuff. And frankly, you might spend a little less time pouting next time I forget your birthday on account of my having to appear on "Davos-Wood Squares" with Warren Christopher, Bono, Henry Kissinger, and Phyllis Diller. Think about that, or you may find yourself replaced by little Su-Ling or Indrani. Because we can do that. Got it?

But Natalie is a (Pentium!) chip off the old block, full of her own fresh insights about today's flattened world. I should have seen it coming.

"Dad, that is *so* Globalization 3.0. In today's pancake world, locally based daddies just aren't the necessity they used to be. Fact is, I already called the tuck-in center in Bangalore, and Nandeen Nilekani, CEO of InfoSys, read me a Dr. Seuss book that I preselected on their website, and he did it with a pretty good American accent. He wished me good luck with my math test tomorrow, and he texted me a really awesome biryani recipe. Make no mistake: Nandeen Nilekani gets it. Frankly, your role in the parenting value-chain is starting to look a little precarious. This is the age of Bedtime 4.0. We're not in Kansas anymore. End of story. Adios. May I have what I like to call a glass of water? Goodnight."

Well! On a certain level, I have to hand it to my daughter: the kid gets it. At least she understands Globalization 4.0, even if our federal government doesn't—and maybe never will. But there's one big thing my daughter Natalie doesn't get: security. As master of the house in a flat-

tened world—*Globalization 4.0!*—I'm responsible for household security.

Sorry, but I can't have a kid smarting off to me like that without inviting another terrorist attack.

As I told President Obama over lunch, daughters are a lot like Sunni Muslims. (And vice versa!) When you tuck them in, you can't just do it with a Big Bird puppet on your left hand. You've got to have Dick Cheney at your right shoulder, tapping an aluminum baseball bat, muttering softly, "Time. For. Bed." Which one of those three words don't you understand, Malia? *Time. For. Bed.* What's that, Sasha? Come again? 'Cause if your princess doll wants its polystyrene head to stay on, I better see some increased horizontalization on the mattress and hear some snoring. Fast.

Does Obama get it? We had all better hope so. Because frankly it doesn't matter how well I tuck you in if you're not willing to be tucked in yourselves. Hey, Afghans and Iraqis: I hope you're listening. If you're busy resisting our authority with the aid of social networking sites like Facebook and jihad.com, no amount of *Goodnight Moon*, lullabies, or drone attacks will help you get to beddie-bye. This is not complicated. I want all your bedrooms to be a peaceful, tolerant region of this interconnected world. Hey, wake up, I'm talking to you. Because ultimately this is your bedroom. Your country. Do you want it to prosper? Or do you want to get strafed by unmanned aircraft for the next three generations? Because we can do that. The choice is yours. Now sleep well—and do you want fries with that? ■

—as told to Chase Madar

*Thomas L. Friedman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist at the New York Times and author of such best-selling books as The World is Flat and Hot, Flat, and Crowded. Chase Madar is a lawyer in New York.*

# Suicide of the West

Will America follow Europe into anomie and atheism?

By Theodore Dalrymple

IN SOME WAYS, things have never been better for Europe. When my father was born, in 1909, his life expectancy was 49; if he had been born today, his life expectancy would be approaching 80. The increase in wealth and standard of living has been startling. In 1960, Sicilian peasants still slept with their farm animals, and my working-class patients remembered sharing lavatories with other households. In France, the years in which it lost its colonial empire are known as *les trente glorieuses*, the glorious thirty, when the French economy grew so fast that absolute poverty was eliminated and the country obtained the best infrastructure in the world. Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* after the war really was a wonder, transforming a country that U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. wanted to keep forever in a state of rural pre-industrialization into the largest exporter of manufactured goods in the world.

Yet for all this success, there is a pervasive sense of doom. Prosperous and long-lived as never before, Europeans look into the future with fear, as if they have a secret sickness that has not yet made itself manifest by obvious symptoms but is nevertheless eating away in their vital parts. They are aware that, in Chinese parlance, the mandate of heaven has been withdrawn from them, and that in losing that, they have lost everything. All that is left is to preserve their remaining privileges as best they can; *après nous*, as a mistress of Louis XV is said to have remarked, *le deluge*.

The secularization of Europe is hardly a secret. Religion's long, melancholy,

withdrawing roar, as Matthew Arnold put it, is a roar no longer, and hardly even a murmur. In France, the oldest daughter of the Church, fewer than 5 percent of the population attend Mass regularly. The English national church has long been an object of derision, and the current Archbishop of Canterbury succeeds in uniting the substance and appearance of foolishness and unworldliness not with sanctity, but with sanctimony. In Wales, where nonconformist Christianity was the dominant cultural influence, most of the chapels have been converted into residences by interior decorators. Vast outpourings of pietistic writings molder on the shelves of secondhand booksellers, which themselves are closing down daily. In the Netherlands, some elements of the religious pillarization of the state remain: state-funded television channels are still allotted to Protestants and Catholics respectively. But while the shell exists, the substance is gone.

Perhaps it is Ireland that offers the most startling example of secularization because it was a late starter. Late starters, however, are often apt pupils; they catch up fast and even surpass their mentors. When I first went to Ireland, the priest was a god among men; people stood aside to let him pass. No respectable family did not count a nun among its members. As for the Archbishop of Dublin, his word was law; the politicians might propose, but he disposed.

In the historical bat of an eyelid, all that has gone, beyond any hope (or fear) of restoration. It would hardly be too much to say that the Church is now reviled in

Ireland. I suspect that if you performed a word-association test using the word "priest," it would more often than not evoke a response of "pedophile," "child abuser," or (at best) "hypocrite."

The extremely low birth-rates in Spain and Italy, the lowest recorded in any modern society, suggest that the populations of these traditionally Catholic countries do not pay much attention to the teachings of their Church. Recently in Belgium, I saw an old convent where the remaining nuns were all in their eighties and would never be replaced. When they die, their convent will presumably be turned into luxury apartments for unwed professional couples with no children.

God is dead in Europe, and I do not see much chance of revival except in the wake of catastrophe. Not quite everything has been lost of the religious attitude, however. Individuals still think of themselves as being of unique importance, but without the countervailing humility of considering themselves as having duty toward the author of their being, a being inconceivably larger than themselves. Far from inducing a more modest conception of man, the loss of religious belief has inflamed his self-importance enormously.

For the person with no transcendent religious belief, this life is all he has. He must therefore preserve and prolong it at all costs and live it to the full. There are not many Hamlets who could be enclosed in a nutshell and count themselves kings of infinite space. For most people, living to the full means consuming as much as possible, having as many experiences as possible, and not only



many experiences, the most extreme experiences possible.

But the problem with consumption is that it soon ceases to satisfy. How else can one explain the crowds that assemble in every city center every weekend to buy what they cannot possibly need and perhaps do not want? Will another pair of shoes supply a transcendent purpose?

The same might be said of the experiences that people feel they must seek if they are to live life to the full. Sports become more extreme in their competitive urgency, holidays more exotic, films more violent, broadcasting more vulgar, the expression of emotion more crude and obvious. Compare advertisements showing people enjoying themselves 60 years ago and now. Mouths are open and screams, either of joy or pain, emerge. Quiet satisfaction is not satisfaction at all; what is not expressed grossly is not deemed to have been expressed.

Of course, there might be transcendent meaning to life apart from that provided by religion. There is scholarship, but the infinitudes of learning cannot be suited to the great majority of mankind: not only would a population of scholars soon starve to death, it would not even be pleasant while it lasted. Transcendent meaning can also be sought in politics. Marxism might have been deficient as an explanation of the world, but for a time it gave people the feeling that they were contributing to the denouement of history, when all contradictions would be resolved, all desires fulfilled, and all human relations easy, spontaneous, and loving. It was obvious nonsense, but not more obvious nonsense than the religious ideas of those whose religious ideas we do not share. And while Marxism was discredited for all but a few aging faithful, the impulse transferred seamlessly to other causes—environmentalism, nationalism, animal rights, feminism.

But overall, most Europeans do not believe in any large political project,

whether it be that of a social class, the nation, or of Europe as a whole. Most Europeans have no concept any longer of *la glorie*, that easily derided notion that can nevertheless impel people to the highest endeavor, to transcend themselves and their most immediate interests. Most Europeans now mock the very idea of a European civilization and therefore cannot feel much inclination to contribute to it.

This miserablism leads to a mixture of indifference toward the past and hatred of it. This is visible in the urban planning of Europe since the war. The monster Le Corbusier, whose main talent was self-promotion, wanted to raze the whole of Paris and turn it into a French reinforced-concrete Novosibirsk. This mania for destruction was by no means confined to France. Dutch Prime Minister Joop den Uyl wanted to pull down much of 17th-century Amsterdam, some of the most elegant domestic architecture in the history of the world, to build a highway and “socially just” housing projects.

Of course, too strong a sense of having inherited what is worth preserving can induce a paranoid defensiveness and incline you to see enemies everywhere; but too weak a sense inclines you to see enemies nowhere. And because of their history, or rather their obsession with the worst aspects of that history, Europeans do not feel able to admit that they wish to preserve their own way of life.

So what is left for Europeans? The present being all that counts, it remains to seek the good life, the enjoyable and comfortable life, for themselves alone. Europeans are fearful of the future because they fear the past; they are desperate to hang on to what they have already got, what the French call *les acquis*, because it represents for them the whole of existence. So important is the standard of living that they see children not as inheritors of what they themselves inherited, but as obstructions to the enjoyment of

life, a drain on resources, an obstacle to next year's holiday in Bali.

Dean Acheson said that Britain had lost an empire and not found a role. You might say of Europe that it has lost its purpose and not found any to replace it.

Is there anything from this experience that Americans might learn? Americans are apt to believe in their own exceptionalism—“We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future,” Secretary of State Madeleine Albright intoned. It would take a book to disentangle the folly, hubris, and evil contained in those infamous words. To begin with, the notion of the indispensable nation implies that the others are dispensable. One might have hoped that we had stopped thinking of millions of people, or even one person, in terms of dispensability. But Americans have reasons for regarding their nation as exceptional.

First, the U.S. is geographically isolated from conflicts in Asia and Europe and has never faced any serious threat from its neighbors. Europe has Russia always on the doorstep, a country that for hundreds of years has placed the military strength of the state ahead of the welfare of the population.

Then the United States is a nation founded on a coherent and attractive, if not profound, philosophy, unlike all other nations that, as it were, “just grewed.” It is an optimistic outlook, one that suggests boundless possibilities. In an age of mass migration, at least in one direction, this gives it a great advantage over Europe, where nationhood is founded on a sociobiological past and which therefore has much greater difficulty, in absorbing large numbers of immigrants. America is thus free of the nastier forms of nationalism that have pullulated in Europe in the past and could again.

Third, there is American religious belief. Perhaps because no church has ever been established, religion has survived better than in countries where

In the wake of the attempted hijacking of a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas, demands to tighten security at airports worldwide could create opportunities for mischief if more contractors are hired. Israel's Mossad is a small intelligence service, but it is able to operate worldwide through its relationships with Israeli companies, many of which are concentrated in the security-services area. This is particularly true in airport and airline security, where Israelis have achieved market dominance in Europe and North America. An investigation conducted by the CIA in the early 1990s determined that Israeli airline-security companies often acted as the local Israeli intelligence office in a number of American cities, including Houston, Denver, and Atlanta, where Mossad had no official presence. The companies, which included former Israeli intelligence and military officers among their staffs in the United States, would routinely carry out support operations for Mossad. Many of the operations were illegal, including the investigation of American citizens and the exploitation of access to restricted criminal-information data banks at airports at the request of Israeli intelligence. In one case, the CIA was able to intercept a series of back-and-forth faxes to a company operating in Houston detailing precisely the sort of information that was being sought by Tel Aviv. The Agency assessment concluded that the airline-security company was de facto the Mossad Houston Station.

The involvement of Israeli security companies in international air travel is enormous. To cite only one example, International Consultants on Targeted Security (ICTS) was the security company at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, where Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab boarded his flight to Detroit. In addition to its airport-security screening contracts worldwide—including Hong Kong, Bangkok, Auckland, Singapore, and Macau—ICTS also serves 200 carriers in 65 European airports, including London Gatwick and Frankfurt. It is the security contractor in Europe for Continental, American, U.S. Airways, Delta, and United Airlines. In the U.S., it provides security at Chicago O'Hare, Newark, Los Angeles, and Boston through a totally owned subsidiary, Huntleigh.

Israeli human rights groups have long claimed that airport-security teams have used their access to restricted databases and files to collect information on profiled Arabs and other targeted individuals under cover of managing security operations. In November 2009, an Israeli security official was deported from South Africa for conducting aggressive operations against Arab travelers through the Johannesburg Airport. It was reported at the time that the Israelis had also been collecting information on other travelers belonging to groups critical of Israeli policies, including one woman named Virginia Tilley, who was taken to a room and given a hostile interrogation before having her luggage searched and her documents copied. Tilley was a researcher at the South African Human Sciences Research Council, a think tank that had been critical of Israeli policy in the West Bank.

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religious belief has been closely associated with temporal power. Once the power to enforce conformity and suppress dissent declines in states where there has been a state religion, religious belief itself declines precipitately, for it is seen as having chosen the wrong side of history. There is no danger of this in the U.S., and the religiosity of Americans keeps alive the little platoons that are so important in maintaining the vigor of civil society independent of government.

Finally, there is American military power, unprecedented in world history. America spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined. This should secure its predominance for the foreseeable future.

In short, the United States is free, or nearly so, from the principal factors that have led to the decline and immobilism of Europe, its sclerosis, rigidity, and lack of ability to confront the challenges facing it.

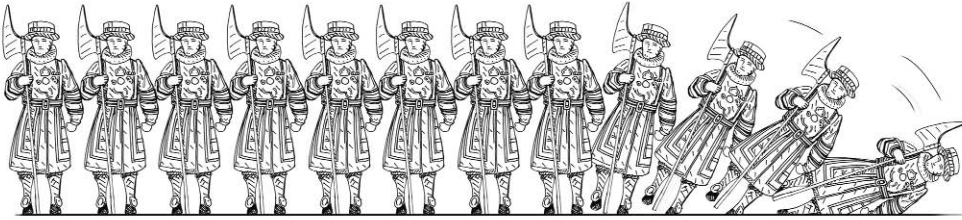
But like Europeans, Americans have not proved deeply attached to limited government, and the difference between Europe and America in this respect is only one of degree rather than type. The extension of government power in the current crisis is not meeting much resistance. The leaders of American life have placed almost religious faith in a man who promises to extend the role of the state.

American religiosity strikes foreigners as superficial and as much a kind of communal psychotherapy as a genuine faith. American religion is Dale Carnegie transposed to a mildly, and unconvincingly, transcendental plane; a lot of American religious services are like meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous without the alcoholics.

Moreover, military power is often if not illusory at least of limited use, especially when nations have scruples. Where a public opinion exists, the full force of military power cannot be employed on the task of limitless repression. And

*Continued on page 50*





# Hail Cesar

Perhaps we are less racially sensitive in Britain than you are in the United States. Most people here, at any rate, would not have been as concerned as Sarah Palin was

by Harry Reid's remarks about "Negro dialect." Most people here would have thought that Senator Reid was just being charmingly old-fashioned.

Britons tend to focus on immigrants rather than on racial minorities, no matter how dark-skinned (or light-skinned) those minorities are. There is a feeling on the street now that there are too many Poles and Romanians in London. In Piccadilly Circus on Christmas Eve, I came across four young men wrapped in sleeping bags and blankets. One was awake and rolling a cigarette. I assumed the men were Scottish drunkards and asked the smoker where they were from. "Poland," he said. He was ingratiatingly contrite about the state he was in. I gave him a small amount of money and, like a neurotic nun, asked him whether he'd be going to Mass on Christmas Day. "Oh, yes," he said, and grinned.

But without immigration, where would we be? Many of the most distinguished Englishmen and women have been immigrants: William the Conqueror, William of Orange, George I, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, T.S. Eliot, Lady Randolph Churchill, Lady Astor, the Duke of Edinburgh, Conrad Black, Mary Reid. What is true of England is even truer of the United States. The roll of honor is thunder in our ears: Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Carnegie, George Shearing, Bob Hope, Oscar Peterson, Henry Kissinger, Cary Grant, Lucky Luciano, Captain James T. Kirk.

Perhaps the greatest immigrant in recent years, however, is Cesar Millan, the Mexican-American dog trainer who has taken the world by storm with his TV show. Not only is he a good advertisement for immigration—he is a good advertisement for illegal immigration. He slipped across the border 20 years ago, and while still undocumented set up the Pacific Point Canine Academy. In 2000, he regularized his status and, in 2004, launched "The Dog Whisperer" on the National Geographic Channel, subsequently winning two Emmys. Last year, he became a U.S. citizen. Good for Cesar; good for the United States.

And good for all of us. There is something about this cocky, strutting, brave Mexican that is instantly appealing. But has he got anything to teach me? Hard to say. Just after Christmas, I adopted Harry, a freckled, 8-year-old Springer Spaniel, and a few days later I did the only thing possible under the circumstances: I bought Cesar's *Be The Pack Leader: Use Cesar's Way to Transform Your Dog ... And Your Life*.

Now I feel guilty. Here's why. Harry is a coward. I like that in a dog, but I am not sure that Cesar does. The other day in the park, Harry and I were approached by a tough Afro-Caribbean geezer accompanied by an even tougher Staffordshire Bull Terrier. No doubt both were pussycats, but I am pleased to report that Harry gave them almost as wide a berth as I did. His eyes were in the back of his head as we passed the

man and his dog, and Harry looked shiftily sideways at me, perhaps for reassurance. He didn't get any, and that's where I went wrong.

According to Cesar, I am supposed to be the leader, not the cringer. I am supposed to show "calm assertive energy" like Oprah. I am supposed to recognize Harry's energy level, which, ideally, ought to correspond to my own. There are four types of energy in a dog, Cesar teaches: very high energy, high energy, medium energy, and low energy. Who'd have thought? In the dog world, says Cesar, "energy is personality." When I read that passage to Harry, he looked at me with big, sad, reproachful eyes and shrugged. "Whatever," he said. "Who is this guy?"

Much of this stuff could have been dreamt up in a solar-powered Los Angeles tanning parlor, but I come to praise Cesar, not to bury him. The man is a genius, the American Dream made virtual reality, and as savvy as they come. Twenty years ago, he could not speak American. Now he speaks it more fluently than most natives, instructing us, for example, to get in touch with our intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and instinctual sides. At the same time, though, he has little time for gringo sentimentality. "Your dog is a dog," he says, "not a baby or a small furry person with a tail" and "This is a choke chain—learn how to use it."

Nothing Cesar says applies to Harry, of course, or to me. Harry is not just a dog, and I am not a leader. There will be no transformation. Still, thank heaven for the Dog Whisperer. He may not please the American Humane Society, but he sure pleases me. ■

# Old World Charm

In Belgium, I have seen the past and it works.

By R.J. Stove

*Arthur Hastings: Mind you, it's very different in France, isn't it?*

*Hercule Poirot: I would not know. I am not French, I am Belgian.*

*Arthur Hastings: Well, it's the same thing, you both eat horse-meat.*

—Agatha Christie, *The Alphabet Murders*

ONE OF MONTY PYTHON'S 1970s sketches contains the profound observation, "Suddenly—nothing happened." It is a line hard to resist recalling when one ventures into Belgium's capital. For anyone who has arrived in Brussels after London's horrors, resistance is not merely hard but hopeless.

At the cross-Channel Eurostar train's London depot are all the appurtenances of the terrorism-obsessed Nanny State: endless perusal of one's passport, as if mere staring at each of its pages in turn would reveal the key to the origin of the universe; CCTV screens everywhere; swaggering boors in uniform who subject passengers to almost every possible body-searching technique short of outright indecent assault. But at the Eurostar's Brussels depot—zilch. No third degree, no screaming intercom announcements, no foot- (or knuckle-) dragging customs guards. Even the station's much dreaded pickpocketing gypsies are nowhere to be seen. I arrived on a Sunday; perhaps for the gypsies, as once for Melina Mercouri, Sunday is a day of rest.

After London, Brussels has an atmosphere difficult to describe yet somehow evoking freedom. How unpatrician. How inimical to every concept

of "national greatness." How lovely. The tribute Alistair Cooke once paid to Ireland seems relevant for Belgium as well: "The great thing about this country is—there's always somebody who doesn't care."

Belgium might not be everyone's first choice for a pleasure jaunt, but then I was here less for pleasure than business. Before arriving, I had done everything that Australia-based sources and abundant international interlibrary loans allowed to research my biography of Belgium's leading composer, César Franck. This book has occupied me for more than a decade. It threatens to surpass in length, if not in readability, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.

What I could no longer postpone consulting were Franck-related archival materials available solely in two Belgian cities, one of them Brussels itself, the other Liège, Franck's birthplace. Understandably, neither Brussels's Bibliothèque Royale nor Liège's Conservatoire would allow such materials to be removed from the premises. So here I was, 11,000 miles from home, wondering if the whole project would prove an expensive disaster.

I need not have worried for a second. From both Brussels's and Liège's librarians I experienced civility, efficiency, and generosity that made me feel like no one so much as a starving Italian peasant in 1948 receiving his first taste of Marshall Plan largesse. Not even my earlier, protracted e-mail correspondence had prepared me for the conscientiousness with which these librarians smoothed my

research route. On their goodwill I shall not expatiate here. Perfect intellectual happiness has its own Chatham House rules. And what I underwent, when confronted with rare documents that I had never expected to see—including two Franck manuscripts of whose existence I had not hitherto learnt—came as close to intellectual bliss as anything I am likely to know in this life. What I supposed would require weeks of labor took mere days. There are many worse destinies than to spend extra free time in Belgium.

\* \* \*

While Belgium occupies no bigger an area than New Jersey, it contains more than 10.6 million people, 1.7 million of whom live in Brussels itself. The specter of loneliness is unlikely to haunt Belgians. But strangely, the place seldom feels cluttered. After the insane overcrowding of London life, Brussels seems almost like a somnolent country town, free from excessive vehicular traffic, from London's grotesque polyphony of incessant car horns (what P. J. O'Rourke called "Egyptian brake pedals"), and from the caged-rat rudeness now compulsory with public London discourse. Merely to ask directions from a stranger is to appreciate the contrast.

Me (in French): Excuse me, sir, where is the cathedral?

Brussels Stranger (in French): Over there, to your left.

This was the outcome of a similar request, several days earlier, in London:



Me (in English): Excuse me, sir, where is Highbury and Islington Underground station?

First London Stranger: (pause for thought) Humph. (second pause for thought, followed by wordless departure in opposite direction)

Me: Excuse me, sir, where is Highbury and—

Second London Stranger (dressed like corporate executive and clutching cell phone): Har the fook would Ah fookin well know, you fookin orsehole? Can't you fookin well see Ah'm fookin well on a fookin phone call, whah don't you fookin well go fook yourself, you fooker?

Such a contrast suggests that Belgium might be a country that, whatever its problems, is still run by and for adults. The Brussels hotel check-in process confirms this impression. From start to finish it lasts approximately one minute.

You subsequently enter your en suite bathroom, with vivid recollections of the discomforts inseparable from British scouring procedures. In Brussels, when you turn on the hot tap, you get hot water. When you turn on the cold tap, *le voilà*: cold water. You use a Brussels public telephone, in the full expectation—based on what London offers—that the process will be like trying to reach a specific political prisoner in Pyongyang. Behold, the Brussels telephone functions at the first attempt, and the line is clear. The train-ticket machine exudes the correct change. Is this Cartesian logic or what?

It gets better. Amazing how many doors, literally as well as metaphorically, the phrase “*Je suis australien*” opens. The Bibliothèque Royale's front-desk receptionist consoled with me about the terrible fires of February 2009, near Melbourne (“200 morts!”). Would “*Je suis anglais*” or “*Je suis américain*”

have led to such courteous treatment? Well, probably yes, provided that the Brit or American avoided the assumption that everything worth saying is worth saying in English. (The Brussels hotel lobby includes clocks showing the time in London, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and “Sidney”: that last spelling a pleasingly provincial touch in this most cosmopolitan of towns.)

This leads us to one of the few facts familiar to almost everyone about Belgian life, apart from its beer, its chocolate, and the circumstance that its most renowned national statue is of a nude boy with a bladder problem: the language barrier.

In Belgium's north, and increasingly in Brussels itself, the locals speak Flemish, which looks the same as Dutch on paper, but sounds different in practice. South of Brussels, including in Liège, the locals speak French. Even the capital's name is something of a battleground: “Bruxelles” in French, “Brussel” in Flemish. In the capital, every street sign has to be bilingual.

## **BELGIUM MIGHT BE A COUNTRY THAT, WHATEVER ITS PROBLEMS, IS STILL RUN BY AND FOR ADULTS.**

Not that French in Belgium uniformly accords with French in France. Belgians' French periodically seems strange, as if they were talking through clenched teeth. “*Bonjour monsieur, comment allez-vous?*” often emerged, to my admittedly imperfect ear, as “*Bonzour m'zieur, commendallay veur?*” At breakfast I once asked after the butter (*beurre* in French), only to be told by the waitress that she had no “beer” (which is what *beurre* sounded like on her lips). Differences in vocabulary occur also. “Seventy,” which in French French is “*soixante-dix*,” is in

Belgian French “*septante*.” Frenchmen refer to a laundromat as “*une blanchisserie*,” but each of several Brussels laundromats that I noticed called themselves “*un washing*.”

\* \* \*

At a delightful Brussels restaurant, I met Dr. Paul Belien, whose writing has appeared in *The American Conservative*, and the Irish-born Mary Ellen Synon, whose work has appeared in *Chronicles*. Both were full of the milk of human kindness and useful tips about aspects of Belgian administration that never make it into the Anglo media. Belien has produced *A Throne in Brussels*, a murderously detailed secret history of Belgian malefaction from the country's founding in 1830 until almost last week. Reading it is like watching on stage one of those Jacobean tragedies where every character is a scumbag. Lavishly footnoted, brilliantly argued, and written in excruciatingly lucid prose, Belien's book is probably a masterpiece.

Nonetheless—call me a sanguine colonial rube if you will—a nagging doubt persists. If Belgium is so horrible, how does Belien himself prove to be so agreeable? Is wholesale crookedness, assuming that Belgium has it, really the worst thing that can befall a country? Which does more damage: the intrigues of penny-ante shysters like the Belgians Belien describes or a Woodrow Wilson's utterly sincere and utterly homicidal *mission civilisatrice*? How would any nation's past stand up to pitiless Belien-type forensic scrutiny? In Belgium's annals there at least seems to have been

no civil war causing 600,000 dead, no JFK, no LBJ, and—still more commendable—no Jefferson bombinating about equal rights while getting jiggy with the help. Could relentless national self-dissatisfaction be as fundamentally biased as the relentless national self-congratulation of Andrew Roberts?

At least *A Throne in Brussels* prompted me to undertake Modern Belgian Political Science 101, this course being aided by occasional conversations with local experts (i.e., the nearest taxi driver). As far as I can make out, Belgium is now ruled by a constantly fluctuating league dominated by the Up Your Nose With A Rubber Hose Party, the Tax Reform—Don't Make Me Laugh Party, the You'd Better Not Even Think About An Ethics Investigation Party, and the We're Gonna Make You Like Islamic Immigration If It's The Last Thing We Do Party. Most of these groups, moreover, have Flemish-speaking and French-speaking subdivisions. No use greasing the Up Your Nose With A Rubber Hose Flemish fixers' palms if you have not truckled to the UYNWARH French fixers also. And, doubtless, vice versa. Moreover, it appears that no political combination ever gets a majority in Parliament, which—as you could well have gathered from the international press since about 1995—gives the balance of power to the You Say We're A Pedophile Network Like It's A Bad Thing Party.

Shortly before my arrival, former Belgian Prime Minister Hermann Van Rompuy ("Hermann Van Rumpy-Pumpy," as British expatriates call him) became president of the European Union, defeating the Beltway's preferred candidate, one Tony Blair. It seems that Mr. Van Rompuy sought office on the following political platform:

Article 1: I'm not Tony Blair.

Article 2: I'm not Tony Blair.

Article 3: I'm not Tony Blair.

Article 4: I'm not Tony Blair.

Article 5: Since I've said four times that I'm not Tony Blair, how bad can I be?

Facially he bears a much remarked resemblance to E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial. If we must be governed by space invaders—and the recent history of Western Civ suggests that we must—then they might as well look like space invaders. Van Rompuy's prime ministerial successor, Yves Leterme, doesn't look like a space invader; he looks like a dissipated version of Matt Damon. But there is no guarantee that he will still be in charge by the time these words get printed. The next Belgian prime minister could be anyone.

\* \* \*

All this legislative instability feels redolent of French leadership between the wars. Georges Clemenceau begat Paul Deschanel who begat Alexandre Millerand who begat Raymond Poincaré who begat Gaston Doumergue who begat Edouard Herriot ... and so forth, like an Old Testament genealogical roll call. What puzzles and gratifies the mere foreigner is that, political chaos or not, the part of Belgium I visited appears to work.

In both Brussels and Liège, the trains run on time. If you drive, you can park your car without disgorging fees equal to the gross national product of Bangladesh. Almost every historic landmark can be reached on foot from almost every other historic landmark. Property prices, although high by current American standards, are derisory by Australian ones. Customer service personnel assume, "The customer may not always be right, but there's a chance that he is, so let's humor him." On arriving at my Liège lodgings, I uttered my usual half-apologetic "*Je suis aus-*

*tralien.*" The Heidi Klum lookalike behind the desk answered: "*Et vous parlez français très bien.*"

And the food ... oh ye gods, the food. In a Brussels cafe one lunchtime, I ordered a sandwich with smoked salmon and mozzarella. The waiter brought in the biggest baguette that I have ever seen in my life. It looked like an edible version of the Eiffel Tower lying on its side. It was delicious, although it took me about 20 minutes to finish. "How much?" I asked, fearing that my ten-euro note would be inadequate. Total cost: three and a half euros. About \$5.

That is Belgium. Wonderful museums and art galleries. Lots of glorious architecture. Superb Gothic churches. Paris's beauties without Paris's pressures. Outbreaks of politeness everywhere. And the food.

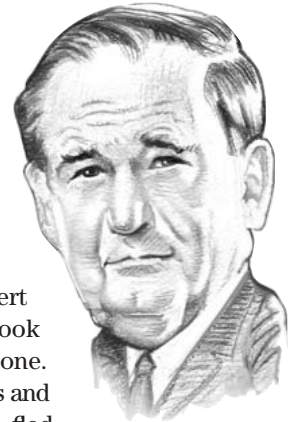
But it is a nation that requires an effort to appreciate. You can fall in love with Venice's splendors without having read a solitary scrap of Venetian history. You can see the Swiss Alps and be moved. Not so with Belgium. So do your homework. Read *A Tall Man in a Low Land* by British journalist Harry Patterson, who is somewhat like a raunchier version of Bill Bryson. If you can already speak French, revise it. If you cannot, enroll at your nearest Alliance Française branch and acquire the rudiments. A few French phrases spoken to Belgians in a halfway decent accent will bring numerous rewards. If you demonstrate an actual knack for French conversation, they will be tempted to give you honorary citizenship.

Yes, it's corrupt. It's Old Europe. It's living beyond its means. Its unemployment rate is dreadful. On Dr. Belien's evidence, it probably shouldn't have been cobbled together anyway. And I love it. ■

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## The God That's Failing



"AMERICA IS LOSING THE FREE WORLD" was the arresting headline over the *Financial Times* column by Gideon Rachman. His thesis: the largest democracies of South America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—Brazil, South Africa, Turkey, India—are all moving out of America's orbit.

President Lula of Brazil has cut a "lucrative oil deal with China, spoken warmly of Hugo Chavez," hailed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on his election "victory," and honored the Iranian president with a state visit.

In the Security Council, South Africa sided with Russia and China in killing human-rights resolutions and protecting Zimbabwe and Iran. Turkey has moved to engage Hezbollah, Hamas, and Tehran and spurn Israel. Polls show anti-Americanism surging in Turkey. From trade to sanctions on Iran and Burma, India sides with China against America.

The ruling parties in all four were democratically elected. Yet in all four, democratic solidarity is being trumped by an older solidarity—of Third World people of color against a "white, rich Western world."

Writing in *World Affairs*, Geoffrey Wheatcroft quotes Aaron David Miller that across the Middle East, America is "not liked, not respected and not feared."

What makes this "frightening," says Wheatcroft, "is that many American politicians and commentators ... have yet to grasp this reality. Such ignorance is evident in the bizarre notion—current even before George W. Bush took the oath of office—that America not only can and should spread democracy, but that this would be in the American national interest. Why did anyone think this?"

Asks Wheatcroft, "If the United States is not liked or respected throughout the

Arab countries, why on earth would Americans want to democratize them?"

Excellent question. Some of us have been asking it of the democracy-über-alles neoconservatives for decades. Yet these democracy worshipers not only converted Bush, they demanded and got free elections in Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and Egypt. Big winners—Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Wheatcroft quotes Eugene Rogan, who has written a history of the Arab peoples, that "in any free and fair election in the Arab world today, the Islamists would win hands down. ... [T]he inconvenient truth about the Arab world today is that in any free election, those parties hostile to the United States are likely to win."

Given free, inclusive elections in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, there is a likelihood our allies would be dumped and leaders chosen who were committed to kicking us out of the Middle East and throwing the Israelis into the Mediterranean.

What, then, is the rationale for the National Endowment for Democracy to promote such elections?

In *World on Fire*, Amy Chua writes that in Third World countries there is almost always a "market-dominant minority"—Indians in East Africa, whites in South Africa, overseas Chinese—which, in a free-market, attains higher levels of income and controls a disproportionate share of the wealth. When democracy arrives, however, the racial, tribal, or ethnic majority votes to dispossess these market-dominant minorities.

When colonialism ended in East Africa, Indians were massacred. The Chinese suffered a horrible pogrom in Indonesia in 1965, when the dictator Sukarno fell—and another when Suharto fell. Picked clean, two-thirds of the 250,000 whites in

Rhodesia

when Robert Mugabe took power are gone. Half the Boers and Brits have fled

Jacob Zuma's South Africa. In Bolivia, Evo Morales is dispossessing Europeans to reward the "indigenous people" who voted him into power. Chavez is doing the same in Venezuela.

Query: if democracy, from Latin America to Africa to the Middle East, brings to power parties and politicians who, for reasons religious, racial, or historic, detest the "white, rich Western world," why are we pushing democracy in these regions?

Our forefathers were not afflicted with this infantile disorder. John Winthrop, whose "city on a hill" inspired Ronald Reagan, declared that among civil nations, "a democracy is ... accounted the meanest and worst of all forms of government."

Added Jefferson, "A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51 percent of the people may take away the rights of the other 49." Madison agreed: "Democracy is the most vile form of government."

If racial and religious bonds and ancient animosities against the West trump any democratic solidarity with the West, of what benefit to America is democracy in the Third World? And if one-person, one-vote democracy in multi-ethnic countries leads to dispossession and persecution of the market-dominant minority, why would we promote democracy there?

Why would we promote a system that empowers enemies and imperils friends? Is democratism our salvation—or an ideology of Western suicide? ■

# His-Panic

Talk TV sensationalists and axe-grinding ideologues have fallen for a myth of immigrant lawlessness.

**By Ron Unz**

ACCORDING TO LOU DOBBS, “a third of the prison population in this country is estimated to be illegal aliens,” and Glenn Beck regularly warns of “an illegal alien crime wave.” Congressman Tom Tancredo insists, “The face of illegal immigration on our borders is one of murder, one of drug smuggling, one of vandalism for all the communities along the border, and one of infiltration of people coming into this country for purposes to do us great harm.” Michelle Malkin adds an even more terrifying note, calling our borders “open channels not only for illegal aliens and drug smugglers, but terrorists, too.” Even as far back as 2000, the highly regarded General Social Survey found that 73 percent of Americans believed that immigration caused higher crime rates, a level of concern considerably greater than fears about job losses or social unity.

As Latino gangs have gained notoriety in the United States—particularly MS-13, dubbed the “The World’s Most Dangerous Gang” by usually restrained *National Geographic*—images of violent foreigners have come to dominate much of the national debate on immigration policy. A perception has taken root in the minds of the American public and many elected leaders that the greatest threat posed by mass immigration is crime.

In recent decades, most immigrants have been Hispanic; Asians, who constitute the other large portion of the inflow, are generally regarded as economically

successful and law-abiding. Although many Hispanics are American-born, the vast majority still comes from a relatively recent immigrant background. So to a considerable extent, popular concerns about immigrant crime and popular concerns about Hispanic crime amount to the same thing. While fears of perceived racial insensitivity may force many critics to choose their words carefully, widespread belief that Hispanics have high or perhaps very high crime rates seems to exist.

But is this correct? Or are these concerns rooted in the same excitable and ideological mindset that produced endless stories of Saddam’s notorious WMD, with activists and their media accomplices passing along rumors and personal beliefs in pursuit of a political agenda rather than bothering to determine the facts? Does America face a Hispanic crime problem or merely a Hispanic crime hoax?

Personal experiences are no substitute for detailed investigation, but they sometimes provide a useful reality check. Since the early 1990s, I’ve lived in Silicon Valley, a region in which people of white European ancestry are a relatively small minority, separately outnumbered by both Asians and Hispanics, with many of the latter quite poor and often here illegally. On any given day, more than half of the people I encounter in Palo Alto are Hispanics from immigrant backgrounds. Yet my area of the country has exceptionally

low crime rates and virtually no serious ethnic conflict. This confounds the expectations of many of my East Coast friends.

Prior to moving back to my native California, I lived for five years in Jackson Heights, Queens, one of the most heavily immigrant and ethnically diverse parts of New York City. There as well, white Europeans were a small minority and immigrants from various Latin American countries were the largest ethnic group, close to an absolute majority of the local population. On a typical afternoon or evening, probably 80 percent of the people walking the streets of my neighborhood were non-white, and on dozens of occasions I returned home from Manhattan on a late-night train, the only white face in the subway car. Yet in all my years of living there, I never encountered a hostile or menacing situation, let alone suffered an actual criminal attack. Hardly what one would expect from television images, let alone the wild claims made by conservative magazines or talk radio. The “thousands of brutal assailants and terrorists” *City Journal*’s Heather MacDonald finds among our immigrant population must have moved into someone else’s neighborhood.

So were my personal experiences atypical? Or are the media and conservative movement portrayals so completely wrong? Hispanics will constitute a quarter of the American population within a generation or two according to current



demographic projections, so this is an important issue for the future of our country.

The obvious way to answer the question is to consult the public FBI Uniform Crime Report database, which provides aggregated information on the race of all criminal suspects throughout America. Unfortunately, there's a problem: Hispanic criminals are sometimes reported as "white" and sometimes not, rendering the federal crime data almost useless. Therefore, indirect means must be used to estimate the crime rate of Hispanics compared to whites. (Throughout this essay, "white" shall refer to non-Hispanic whites.)

One metric to examine might be relative incarceration rates, since most people who begin a life of criminal activity end up behind bars sooner or later—usually sooner. Furthermore, since so much of prison violence is along racial lines, correctional authorities are careful to record the ethnicity of individual inmates, and the aggregate data is made available annually by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Indeed, over the years, prison-reform groups such as The Sentencing Project, as well as various federal judges, have used this official data to criticize the prison system for its massive overrepresentation of racial minorities among inmates relative to their share of the population.<sup>1</sup>

If we examine the data in the most recent 2008 BJS report, published in December 2009, we discover the total Hispanic incarceration rate, while far below that of blacks, is still almost 150 percent above the white average, having fallen a little from the 170 percent figure in 2000.<sup>2</sup> So perhaps those fearful commentators are right and Hispanics commit crimes at roughly two-and-a-half times the rate of whites in America.

The traditional liberal explanation for this would be that Hispanics are considerably poorer than whites, that poverty

and racism cause crime, and that a white-dominated criminal justice system is likely to be biased against suspects of a darker hue. There may or may not be some truth in these common liberal arguments, but since the name of this magazine is *The American Conservative*, let us put them aside at least for now and consider other possible factors.

The most obvious of these are age and gender. An overwhelming fraction of serious crime is committed by the young, young males in particular. This has been the case throughout recorded history and remains true everywhere in today's world. Almost all American crimes are committed by individuals aged 15-44, with the age range 18-29 representing the sharp peak of criminal activity. Also, the 14-to-1 ratio of males to females in the U.S. prison system provides a sense of just how heavily crime is a male phenomenon; for violent offenses, the ratio is even higher.

And as it happens, the age distribution in America for Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites is quite different. The median age for Hispanics is around 27, near the absolute peak of the prime-crime age range. But the median white age is over 40, putting nearly half the white population above the likely age range for committing crimes. While it is certainly true that Hispanic 23-year-olds have much greater criminal tendencies than white 45-year-olds, a more useful question is the relative criminality of Hispanics and whites of the same age. Also, many Hispanics are immigrants, and since immigrants are more likely to be male, there will be a gender skew in the general Hispanic population. Therefore, let us consider the Hispanic imprisonment rate relative to the number of males in the high-crime age range.

Suddenly the numbers change quite a bit, with the relative Hispanic-to-white total incarceration rate dropping by a

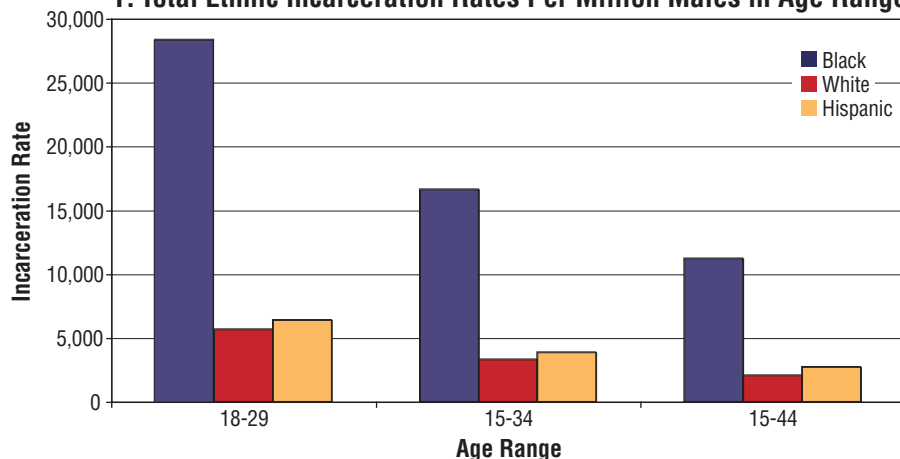
third or more for several of the age cohorts. But even these lower figures may still be a bit misleading. As a recent front page *New York Times* story pointed out, over half of all federal prosecutions these days are for immigration-related offenses, and since a huge fraction of illegal immigrants are from south of the border, the 10 percent or so of U.S. prison inmates who are in federal custody might significantly distort our ethnic imprisonment statistics.<sup>3</sup> Anyway, offenses such as robbery, rape, murder, burglary, assault, and theft are almost always prosecuted in state courts, so it makes sense to separate these street crimes from cases of illegal nannies convicted of illegal nannying.

Another important reason to focus on state-level imprisonment data is the evidence of vast differences among regional criminal-justice systems due to various cultural and political factors. For example, whites in Oklahoma are incarcerated at a rate almost 300 percent higher than whites in New Jersey, and while some of this disparity may result from the greater criminal tendencies of white Oklahomans, it seems likely that the harshness of the local courts and sentencing guidelines may also play an important role. We should therefore try to compare Hispanic incarceration rates with those for whites on a state-by-state basis so as to minimize the impact of differences in local criminal-justice systems.

The most recent BJS publications do not provide state-by-state incarceration data broken down by ethnicity, but the 2005 BJS Bulletin did exactly that, and while relative Hispanic incarceration rates have fallen somewhat in the past five years, the drop has not been large. Therefore, we should be able to use the 2005 figures with confidence.<sup>4</sup>

Our first discovery is that even before adjusting for age, the overall Hispanic incarceration rate drops from 150 per-

**1. Total Ethnic Incarceration Rates Per Million Males in Age Range**



cent above the white rate down to just 80 percent above, presumably reflecting the exclusion of immigration-related federal offenses. We can now use census data to estimate the number of prime-crime-age young males in the two groups, and since there is some uncertainty in deciding which age range is most appropriate for normalization purposes, we should probably explore the results with several different choices, such as 18-29, 15-34, and 15-44.<sup>5</sup> (Many observers believe that the number of Hispanic illegal immigrants in America is sharply underestimated by the government; if so, this would correspondingly reduce the relative Hispanic imprisonment rate.)

The overall age-adjusted national imprisonment rates are shown in Chart 1. Hispanic incarceration rates are now between 13 and 31 percent above the white average, depending upon which age range we choose for normalization purposes. By contrast, the claims of extremely high relative black incarceration rates widely publicized several years ago by The Sentencing Project remain correct even after these age adjustments.

Next, if we examine the relative age-adjusted Hispanic imprisonment rate for individual states, we find huge varia-

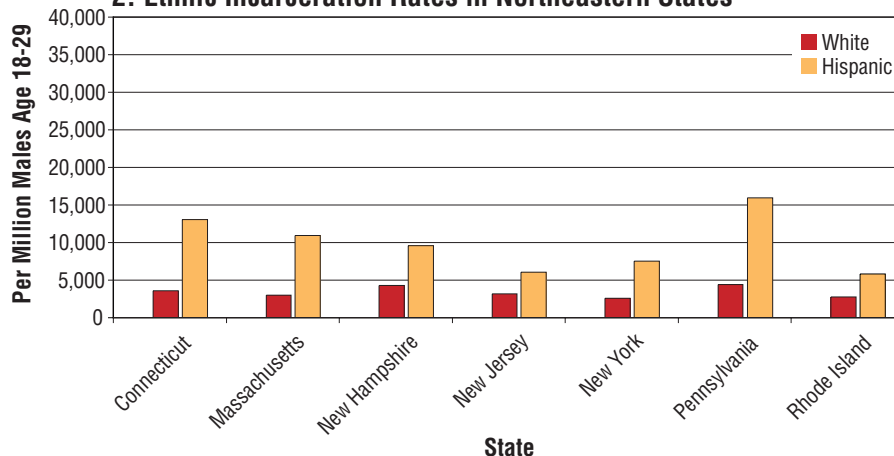
tions. In a number of states, the Hispanic rate is below the white rate, sometimes far below. For example, whites in West Virginia, Arkansas, and Louisiana are imprisoned at three to four times the Hispanic rate relative to their share of the crime-age population. To some degree, this reflects the time-lag impact of the recent arrival of large numbers of Hispanics in these locations, since most of the white convicts entered prison years ago, but such low relative rates of Hispanic incarceration are still intriguing. And even in Florida, where Hispanics have been a large fraction of the total population for decades, the white age-adjusted imprisonment rate is still twice

as high as the Hispanic rate.

Furthermore, contrary to official bureaucratic categories, Hispanics are hardly a monolithic ethnic group and actually exhibit large variations in their cultural traditions based on country of origin. The very low Hispanic imprisonment rate in Florida may reflect the considerable economic and social success of the Cuban community centered there. Another set of obvious outliers are the states of the Northeast, primarily the New York/New England region, in which relative Hispanic imprisonment rates generally run two to three times higher than the national Hispanic average, as shown in Chart 2. These exceptionally high Hispanic incarceration rates probably reflect the considerable social and economic difficulties long experienced by the large Puerto Rican and Dominican communities that have settled in that region.

The high incarceration rate for these Caribbean Hispanics may partially explain general perceptions of Hispanic crime rates. A large proportion of America's intellectual, media, and political elite lives in the Northeast, in cities like New York and Boston, and if the Hispanics traditionally living in those areas have unusually high rates of criminal activity, there would be a natural if mis-

**2. Ethnic Incarceration Rates in Northeastern States**



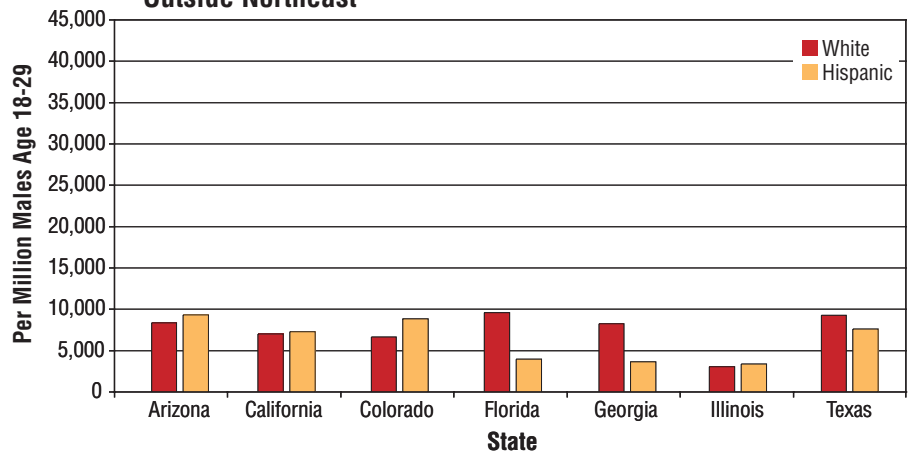
taken tendency to assume that this same pattern also applied to Hispanic groups throughout the country.

But outside the Northeast, the vast majority of Hispanics are Meso-American, being either from Mexico or Central America. Chart 3 summarizes the very different relative imprisonment rates for these groups by focusing on the most heavily Hispanic states outside the Northeast.

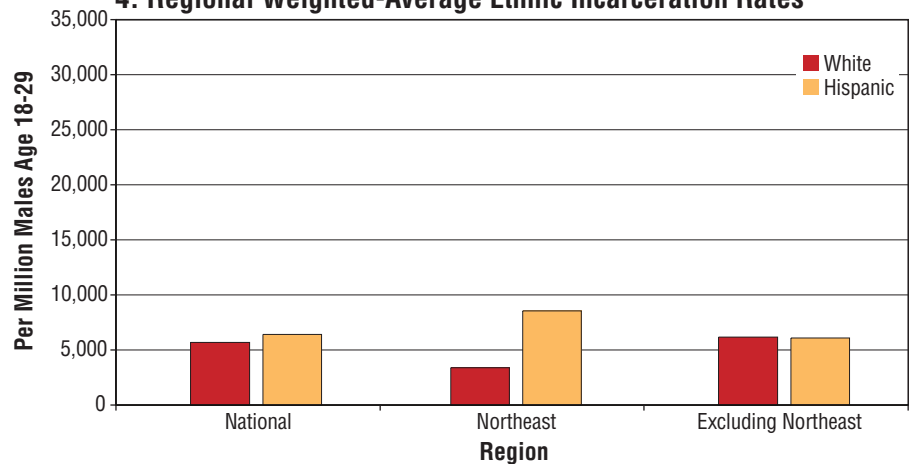
Moreover, if we consider weighted-average age-adjusted Hispanic imprisonment ratios excluding those outlying cases of the Northeastern states, we discover that the remaining figure moves into close parity with white incarceration rates. (See Chart 4.) Since Hispanics are still considerably poorer than whites, this is a striking result. Also, crime rates are always higher in densely populated urban areas than in suburbs or rural communities, and since Hispanics are three times as likely as whites to live in cities, their relatively low imprisonment rates become even more surprising.

Another important point to emphasize is the wide disparity in white incarceration rates throughout the country, even when adjusted relative to the number of whites in high-crime age ranges. For example, age-adjusted imprisonment rates for whites in large Southern states such as Florida, Texas, and Georgia may be 200 percent or even 300 percent higher than those for whites in large Northeastern or Midwestern states such as New York, New Jersey, or Illinois, as shown in Chart 5. Although it is impossible to disentangle completely how much of this gap may be due to higher criminality and how much due to harsher judicial systems, it seems likely that both play important roles. So even if the age-adjusted Hispanic incarceration rate is somewhat above the white rate—perhaps 15 percent higher on average—it still falls close to the center of the overall white distribution.

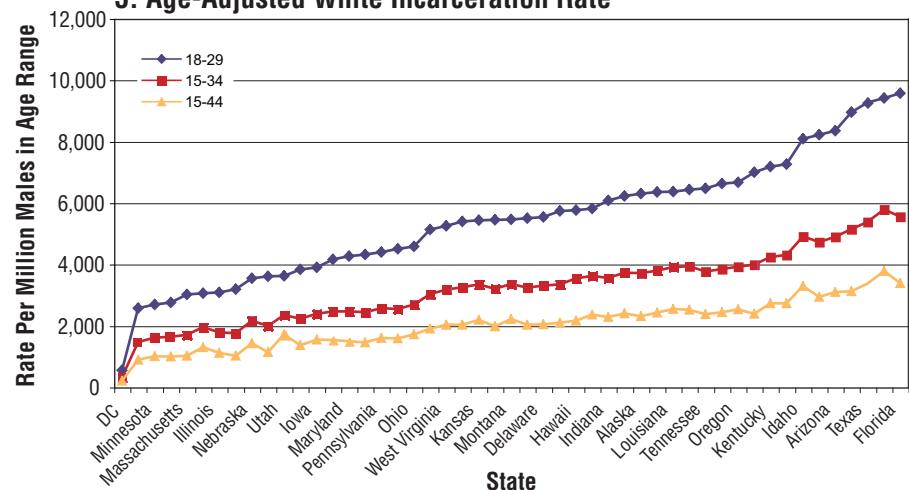
### 3. Ethnic Incarceration Rates in Most Heavily Hispanic States Outside Northeast



### 4. Regional Weighted-Average Ethnic Incarceration Rates



### 5. Age-Adjusted White Incarceration Rate





The substantial regional or cultural differences in apparent white criminality are easily illustrated when we consider the age-adjusted Hispanic/white incarceration ratios in the two most heavily Hispanic states, California and Texas, which together contain roughly half of all Hispanics living in the United States. If we normalize the incarceration rate to the number of males aged 15-34, California Hispanics are imprisoned at 9 percent above the local white rate, while Texas Hispanics are imprisoned at 14 percent below the local white rate. Since California is one of America's most liberal "pro-minority" states and Texas one of the most staunchly "law-and-order" conservative ones, and the Hispanics in both states are overwhelmingly Mexican, these somewhat unexpected imprisonment ratios probably reflect the relative criminality of the local white populations more than anything else.

**IF AMERICAN-BORN MEXICANS AND CENTRAL AMERICANS HAD THE EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH CRIME RATES SUGGESTED IN THAT 2006 STUDY, IT IS STRANGE THAT WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF THIS IN THE TRENDS OF NATIONAL CRIME DATA.**

Another important question is to what degree Hispanic criminal activity is influenced by immigration status. While there is a widespread popular impression that immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, have a propensity for violent crime, actual studies almost invariably come to the opposite conclusion: for almost every ethnic group, Hispanic or otherwise, immigrant generations have lower rates of criminal behavior than their American-born children. This has resulted in concerned speculation that even if Hispanic crime rates today are relatively low, this situation may be temporary, and once the Hispanic population shifts from being mostly immi-

grant to mostly native-born, crime rates might skyrocket. A 2006 Migration Policy Institute study estimated that imprisonment rates are some eight times higher for American-born citizens of Mexican ancestry than for their immigrant co-ethnics.<sup>6</sup> If we can expect Mexican-American crime rates to rise 700 percent in the next generation, we should be very alarmed indeed.

But there are good reasons to doubt the plausibility of that horrific scenario. First, contrary to popular belief, the majority of today's Hispanics are already American-born, and this is certainly true of those in the highest-crime age groups. For example, two-thirds of today's Latinos aged 18-24 are American citizens by birth. This figure has risen from less than half 20 years ago, while crime rates have simultaneously plummeted nationwide, with relative Hispanic imprisonment rates also dropping significantly since 2000. If American-born Mexicans

and Central Americans had the exceptionally high crime rates suggested in that 2006 study, it is strange that we have seen no evidence of this either in the trends of national crime data or in imprisonment statistics.

The major difficulty with the study's evidence is that while prisons have an easy time gathering ethnicity data, determining the immigration status of convicts is far more difficult, and is generally based on self-reporting. Not surprisingly, most convicted felons are not eager to reveal their lack of citizenship and then face deportation once their sentences are completed, so the numbers must be taken with a grain of salt.

In fact, a November 2009 paper by Steven A. Camarota and Jessica M. Vaughan for the Center for Immigration Studies raised serious doubts about the accuracy of these federal immigrant-imprisonment statistics, both based on the doubtful methodology employed and the huge, anomalous swings that occur on an ongoing basis.<sup>7</sup> For example, the official data seems to show a 28 percent decline in the number of incarcerated immigrants between 1990 and 2000, even as the total number of immigrants grew 59 percent, then a sudden 146 percent rise in incarcerated immigrants from 2000 to 2007, a period when immigrant numbers grew only 22 percent. Such changes seem highly implausible and lead to serious doubts that the gap between immigrant Hispanic and American-born Hispanic criminality is anywhere near as great as has been portrayed. Besides, since perhaps two-thirds of today's highest-crime-age Hispanic population is already American-born, there is a strong upper bound on how much crime rates would rise in the future as that fraction gradually rises to three-quarters or more.

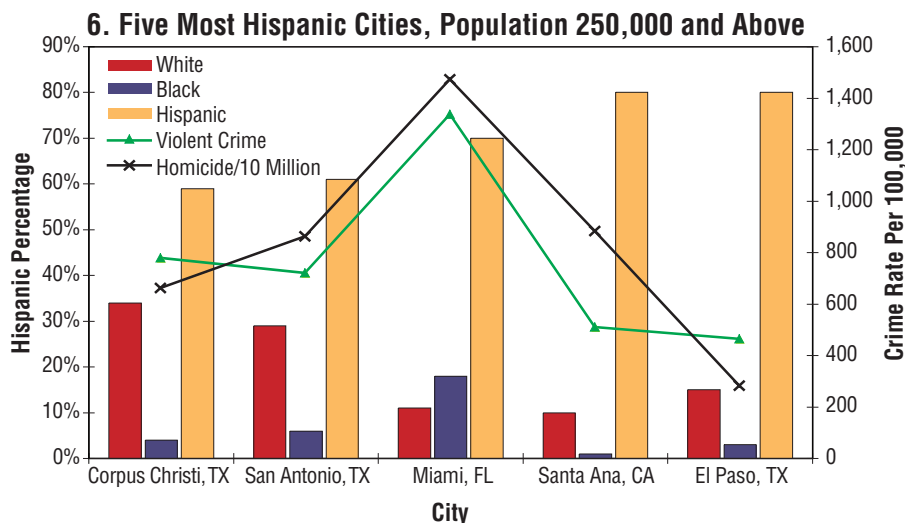
Aside from these imprisonment rates, perhaps we can also gain insight into Hispanic criminality from the crime rates themselves. As mentioned before, the federal statistics on the ethnicity of criminals are unreliable, but by matching the geographical distribution of crime with census data on Hispanic population percentages, we can gain strong circumstantial evidence about the relative criminality of Hispanics and whites.

The smaller the geographical unit we use, the more accurate our analysis will be. But while ethnicity rates can be found for individual zip codes, crime is reported by precinct, and matching these entirely different organizational units would be a major research undertaking. At the opposite end of the spectrum, doing calculations based on entire

states provides little information since the populations and geographies are so large and often diverse, and important relationships would tend to remain hidden. The best compromise between effort and accuracy is to focus on America's larger cities, for which both crime and ethnicity data are readily available. Furthermore, crime rates are much higher in densely populated urban areas, so by confining our analysis to these, we are eliminating some of the bias that would occur if we compared crime rates in rural areas with those in urban ones. The U.S. has fewer than 80 cities with populations of 250,000 or more, and of these, less than half are major cities with at least half a million inhabitants. Such small data sets are reasonably easy to analyze.

Take five minutes to consider the list of America's urban crime rates provided on Wikipedia, and you will notice an intriguing pattern.<sup>8</sup> Nearly all of the most heavily Latino cities have low or even extremely low crime rates, and virtually none have rates much above the national average. Eighty percent Latino El Paso has the lowest homicide and robbery rates of any major city in the continental United States. This is not what we would expect to find if Hispanics had crime rates far higher than whites. Individual cities may certainly have anomalously low crime rates for a variety of reasons, but the overall trend of crime rates compared to ethnicity seems unmistakable.

But let us explore white and Hispanic crime rates in a more systematic fashion, drawing our data from the FBI Uniform Crime Report.<sup>9</sup> Consider the five whitest cities in America: Colorado Springs, Colorado; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Portland, Oregon; Lexington, Kentucky; and Lincoln, Nebraska. These cities' populations average 76 percent white, 9 percent Hispanic, and 8 percent black. Their crime rates are generally far below



the national urban average, with less than half the homicide and robbery rates and a 30 percent lower violent-crime rate. Perhaps we can consider these figures as a reasonable approximation to the general "white urban crime rate." These crime averages may be partly due to the local black and Hispanic populations, but since these cities are so overwhelmingly white, this estimate for the white crime rates is about as close as we can hope to get.

One difficulty we encounter is that these heavily white cities are extremely small in population, with three of the five barely registering over the 250,000 threshold required even to be included in our urban analysis and the average size being less than half that for most cities in our list. But augmenting this list with larger, less white cities would introduce other inaccuracies, so we have no choice but to use these small-city white-crime figures as a benchmark, although with considerable caution.

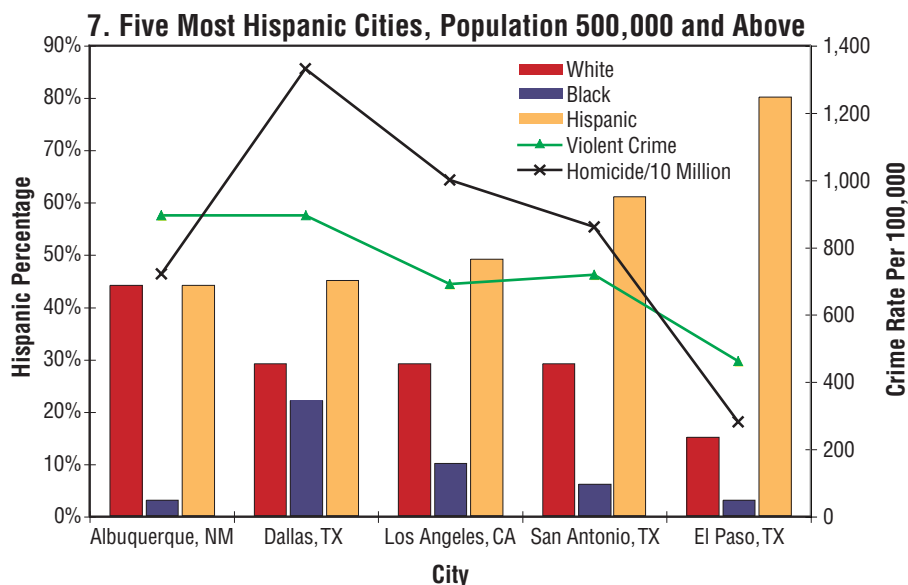
Now let us consider the five most Hispanic cities in America: Corpus Christi, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; Miami, Florida; Santa Ana, California; and El Paso, Texas. Together they total over 3 million in population, averaging 68 percent Hispanic, 22 percent white, and 6

percent black. The ethnicities and crime rates of these cities are displayed in Chart 6.

Overall, the crime rates for these most heavily Hispanic cities are generally low, with violent crime 10 percent below the national urban average and the homicide rate 40 percent lower. On the other hand, the crime rates are still well above those of the white cities we considered above. In fact, the white homicide and violent crime rates are almost one-third lower. This provides some evidence for a higher Hispanic crime rate.

But this evidence is not particularly strong. First, the Hispanic cities are much larger than the white ones, with nearly double the average population. Also, Miami is an extreme outlier, with nearly twice as much crime as the other four Hispanic cities, and shifts the average considerably. If we exclude Miami, half the difference between the crime rates of the most Hispanic and the whitest cities disappears.

Even more striking, the average crime rates for the two most Hispanic cities on our list—Santa Ana and El Paso, each 80 percent Hispanic—are actually below our white urban average, and below the very low crime figures for 86 percent



white Lincoln, the single whitest city in the nation. So although some heavily Hispanic cities have higher crime rates than some heavily white ones, the pattern seems very mixed.

Furthermore, if we consider the overall list of American cities, it is easy to find a number of those with sizable Hispanic populations—30, 40, 50 percent or more Hispanic—that have crime rates below our white urban average. If Hispanic crime rates were much higher than those for whites, this would seem very unlikely.

Similar evidence emerges if we restrict our analysis to major cities of half a million people or more and compare the average crime rates for the five most heavily Hispanic cities—Albuquerque, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and El Paso—to the those of the five whitest—Oklahoma City, Columbus, Indianapolis, Seattle, and Portland. This time, the more Hispanic cities are the ones with the lower crime rates—10 percent below the white cities in homicide and 15 percent lower in violent crime. A particularly remarkable result is that gigantic Los Angeles—50 percent Hispanic and frequently perceived as a dan-

gerous urban hellhole—has violent crime rates close to those of Portland, Oregon, the whitest major city in the nation at 74 percent. The Hispanic cities and their crime rates are displayed in Chart 7.

Here's a final example, much closer to home. Consider two large and comparable American cities—San Jose, California and Seattle, Washington. Both are located

lower: one-third lower for homicide or violent crime in general and with less than half the robbery rate. In fact, none of the most heavily white major cities in America have crime rates anywhere near as low as one-third Hispanic San Jose.

These individual city comparisons may be quantitatively extended to urban crime rates in general by calculating the weighted-average correlation coefficient between the Hispanic percentage of a city and its various crime rates and performing the same calculation for the white-plus-Asian percentage as well. (Asians are a very small population in most cities, so it is convenient to combine them with whites; since all studies show Asians tend to have much lower crime rates than whites, this will tend to reduce the apparent white crime rate.) Whereas all the previous urban crime figures quoted were from 2008, the latest year available, we can obtain the separate correlations for the last several years in order to consider trends over time.

As Charts 8-13 indicate, the Hispanic and white-plus-Asian crime correlation rates are usually quite close and in many cases have converged to almost identi-

### THE MORE HISPANIC CITIES ARE THE ONES WITH LOWER CRIME RATES—10 PERCENT BELOW THE WHITE CITIES IN HOMICIDE AND 15 PERCENT LOWER IN VIOLENT CRIME.

on the West Coast, are overwhelmingly suburban and generally affluent, earn their living from the technology industry, are politically liberal, and have small black populations. Seattle is one of the whitest cities in America at 70 percent, with Asians being the largest minority; Hispanics number only 5 percent. By contrast, San Jose is over 50 percent larger in size and although mostly white and Asian, is one-third Hispanic, with a large number of impoverished illegal immigrants. Seattle's crime rate is indeed low, but the crime rate in San Jose is actually much

cal values, at least since 2005. Moreover, we must remember that all these ethnic percentage rates refer to the total population rather than the percentage of young males in the high-crime years for each group, and as mentioned earlier, the age distributions for Hispanics and whites are very different. In fact, if we repeat these same correlation calculations for the population of males aged 18-29, the Hispanic and white rates substantially diverge, with young Hispanics usually being associated with significantly lower urban crime rates.

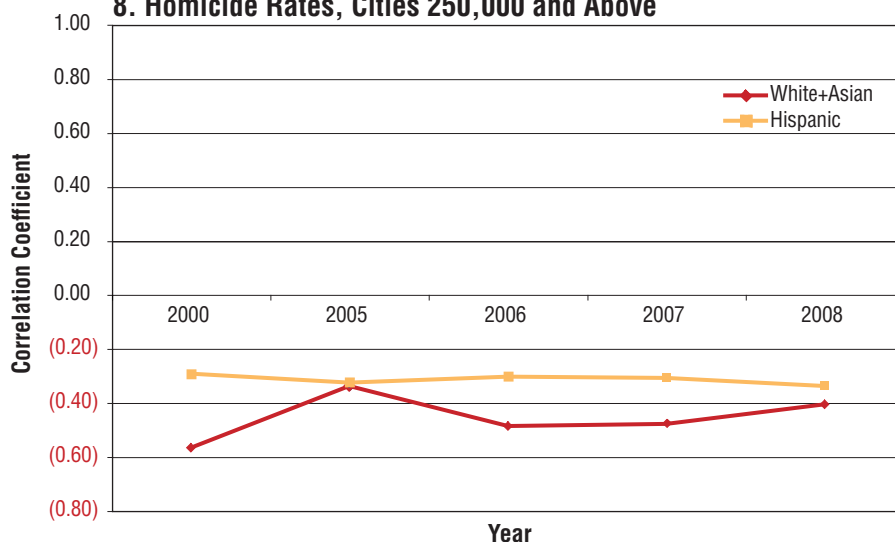


A reasonable question arises: are all of these crime rates actual, or might they be statistical artifacts produced by widespread underreporting of crime in heavily Hispanic areas? We cannot absolutely eliminate this possibility, but for homicides the reporting rate is always close to 100 percent, and since for all these cities the homicide and other serious crime rates tend to follow very similar patterns, there is no evidence that any of these racial patterns were warped by substantial underreporting.

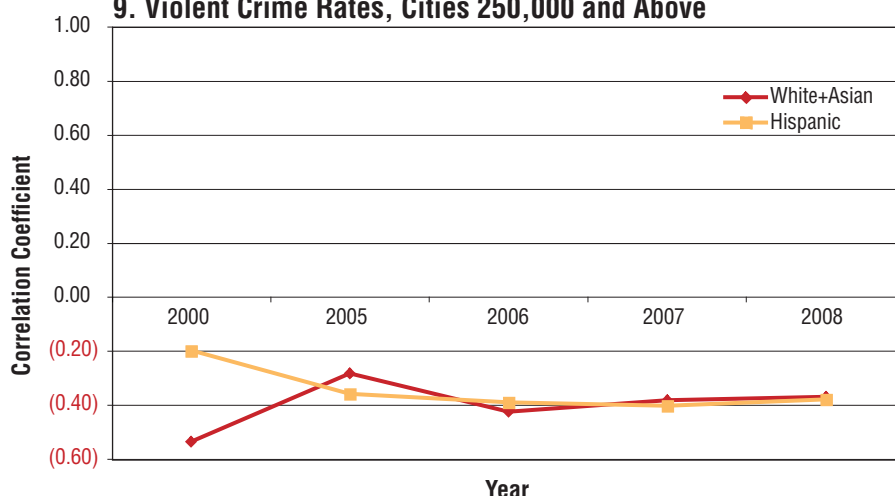
Finally, let us consider the historical crime trends in my native Los Angeles, America's second-largest city. During the middle of the 20th century, it was by far America's whitest large city—roughly 80 percent white European by ancestry—and was generally regarded as America's middle-class suburban paradise. But as the decades went by, LA increasingly became a byword for violence, crime, and ethnic conflict, with the deadly Watts and Rodney King racial riots filling television screens across the country. These enormously negative social changes coincided exactly with the population becoming less white, and although relatively few analysts were willing to suggest a direct causal relationship, I suspect it was noticed by all but the most obtuse observers. As early as 1982, a future LA served as the setting for Ridley Scott's dystopian film "Blade Runner," in which violence, poverty, and sudden death for a vast non-white immigrant population exist side by side with the sybaritic luxury of a tiny remaining white elite.

Since then, these ethnic demographic trends have continued apace, and Los Angeles today ranks as America's least white European large city. Half of the population is Hispanic, and many of these are impoverished illegal immigrants and their families. Yet all crime rates have been falling steadily over the

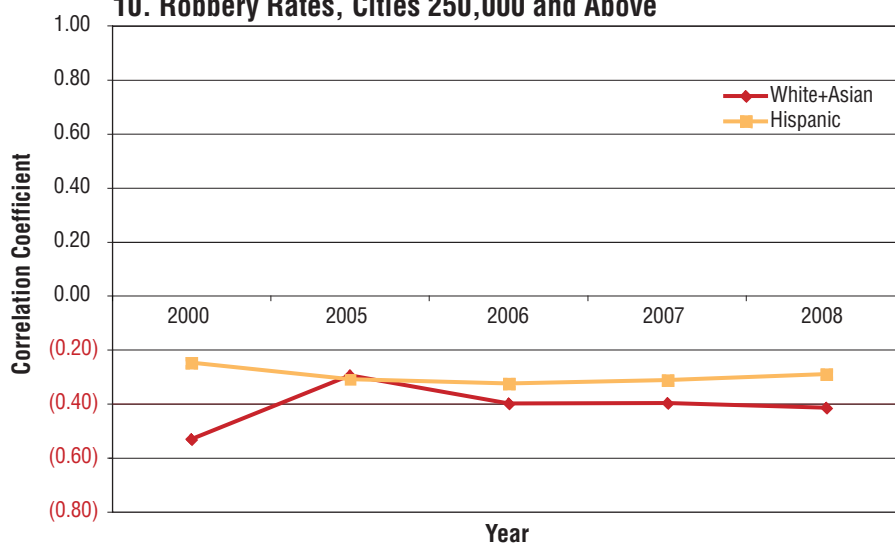
## 8. Homicide Rates, Cities 250,000 and Above



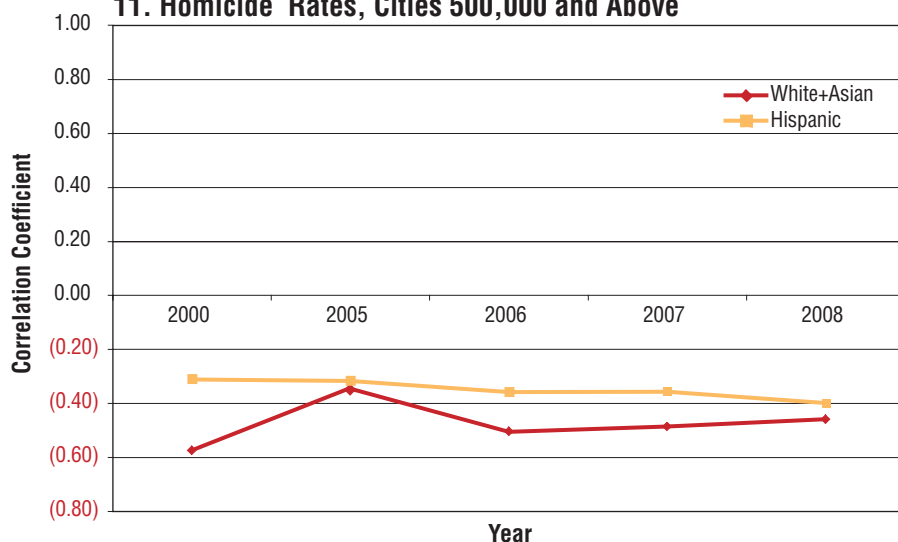
## 9. Violent Crime Rates, Cities 250,000 and Above



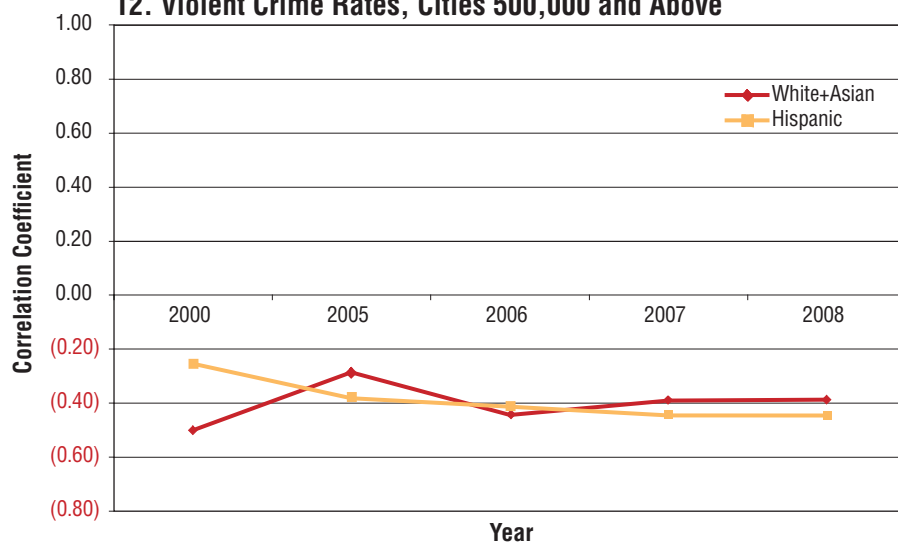
## 10. Robbery Rates, Cities 250,000 and Above



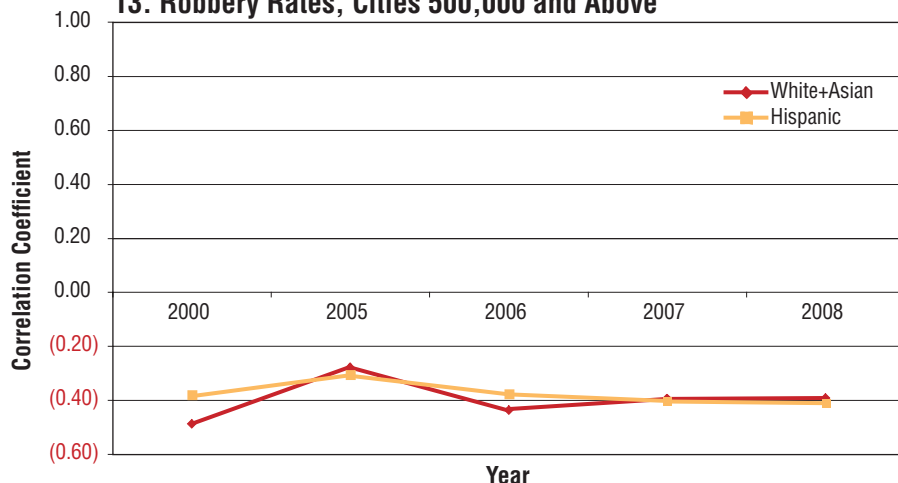
### 11. Homicide Rates, Cities 500,000 and Above



### 12. Violent Crime Rates, Cities 500,000 and Above



### 13. Robbery Rates, Cities 500,000 and Above



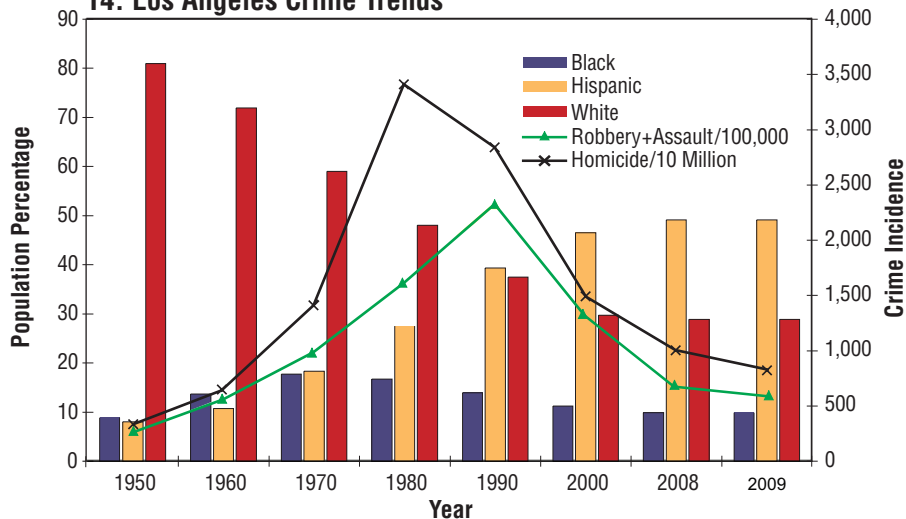
last two decades, with homicide dropping a further 18 percent just last year. As Chart 14 illustrates, most major crime categories are now back down to where they were in the early 1960s, when the population really did look very much like the actors appearing in “*Dragnet*” and “*Leave It to Beaver*.” And indeed, violent crime is now roughly the same as for Portland, Oregon, America’s whitest major city.

This Los Angeles example also raises important questions about the official claims that Latino youths have exceptionally high rates of gang membership, 1800 percent higher than for whites. Los Angeles supposedly has among the worst Hispanic gang problems, yet the city’s actual crime rates are roughly the same as what they were back in the lily-white days of the early 1960s. So if these local gangs aren’t committing much crime, what exactly is the definition of a “gang”?

A cynical observer might draw a connection between the hundreds of millions of dollars the federal government distributes each year for gang-prevention programs and the zeal with which local officials uncover the severity of their gang problems. In the case of Los Angeles, public officials have held January press conferences each of the last several years hailing the unprecedented drops in serious crime rates. They often follow these up a few months later with contrary press conferences on the horrific state of local gang violence and the desperate need for increased federal funds to cope with this scourge. If the federal government pays cities to find gang problems, many city officials will surely oblige them.

Admittedly, all of the arguments presented here are somewhat statistical and circumstantial. Correlation does not prove causality, and it might be possible to come up with a complex and detailed set of ad hoc theories and counter-argu-

**14. Los Angeles Crime Trends**



ments to explain away the vast mass of apparent evidence indicating relatively low Hispanic crime rates. But such an approach places the burden of proof on the wrong side.

The evidence presented here powerfully refutes the widespread popular belief that America's Hispanics have high crime rates. Instead, their criminality seems to fall near the center of the white national distribution, being somewhat higher than white New Englanders but somewhat lower than white Southerners. Taken as a whole, the mass of statistical evidence constitutes strong support for the "null hypothesis," namely that Hispanics have approximately the same crime rates as whites of the same age.

We must bear in mind that most Hispanics are still of very recent immigrant origins and thus are considerably poorer than the average American. There actually does exist a connection between poverty and crime, even if liberals make such a claim, and since today's Hispanic population has roughly the same crime rate as far more affluent whites, there is every reason to expect that this crime rate will drop further as Hispanics continue to move up the eco-

nomic ladder. As the American Enterprise Institute's Douglas Besharov pointed out in an important but insufficiently noticed October 2007 *New York Times* column, the last decade or two have seen an extremely rapid economic advance for most of America's Hispanic population.<sup>10</sup> This rise may be connected with the simultaneous and unexpectedly rapid drop in urban crime rates throughout the country.

Meanwhile, the national debate over immigration remains contentious. Restrictionists can provide numerous completely legitimate arguments in favor of their position, ranging from economic competition and cultural conflict to national overpopulation and environmental degradation. But they will discredit these by including unsubstantiated claims about crime. Conservatives have traditionally prided themselves on being realists, dealing with the world as it is rather than attempting to force it to conform to a pre-existing ideological framework. But just as many on the Right succumbed to a fantastical foreign policy that makes the world much more dangerous than it needs to be, some have also accepted the myth that Hispanic immigrants and their children

have high crime rates. Such an argument may have considerable emotional appeal, but there is very little hard evidence behind it. ■

*Ron Unz is publisher of The American Conservative. He thanks Razib Khan for his assistance in obtaining the crime and ethnicity data from several public websites and for running the cross correlations of the data.*

## Notes

1 "Uneven Justice: State Rates of Incarceration by Race and Ethnicity," Marc Mauer and Ryan S. King, July 2007, *The Sentencing Project*.

2 "Prisoners in 2008," William J. Sabol, Heather C. West, and Matthew Cooper, December 2009, *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*.

3 "Immigration Enforcement Fuels Rise in U.S. Cases," John Schwartz, December 21, 2009, *New York Times*.

4 "Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005," Paige M. Harrison and Allen J. Beck, May 2006, *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*.

5 American Ethnicity calculations are derived from the data provided by the Census Bureau, based on the 2000 Census for that year or the interim American Community Surveys for 2005-2008, available at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

6 "Debunking the Myth of Immigrant Criminality: Imprisonment Among First- and Second-Generation Young Men," Ruben G. Rumbaut, Roberto G. Gonzales, Golnaz Komaie, and Charlie V. Morgan, June 1, 2006, *Migration Policy Institute*.

7 "Immigration and Crime: Assessing a Conflicted Issue," Steven A. Camarota and Jessica M. Vaughan, November 2009, *Center for Immigration Studies*.

8 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_cities\\_by\\_crime\\_rate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_cities_by_crime_rate), January 5, 2010, *Wikipedia*.

9 Urban crime rates are derived from the data provided by the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, available at <http://fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>.

10 "The Rio Grande Rises," Douglas J. Besharov, October 1, 2007, *New York Times*.



# Left Behind

Liberals get a war president of their very own.

By Murray Polner

*With his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Barack Obama signaled that the world had better get ready for a tougher, less forgiving, more quintessentially American approach from a man who certainly gave the soft touch a try.*

—Robert Kagan

*Washington Post*, Dec. 13, 2009

SUDDENLY AND SURPRISINGLY, we have a Bush-like Obama Doctrine. To the applause of liberal hawks and formerly critical neocons, the president declared in his Nobel Peace Prize speech that the U.S. will continue to wage war—though naturally, only “just” war—anywhere and against anyone it chooses in a never-ending struggle against the forces of evil. His antiwar supporters can take seats on the sidelines.

It’s all reminiscent of John F. Kennedy and the prescient George Ball, and afterward Ball and Lyndon Johnson. In the early ’60s, JFK—reluctantly, we are told by his admirers—decided to send 16,000 “trainers” to Vietnam to teach the South Vietnamese how to play soldier and to stop the Communists from sweeping over Southeast Asia. Vast quantities of money and assorted advisers were shipped without accountability to the corrupt gang of thugs running and ruining that country.

Ball, the one dissenter in Kennedy’s entourage, pleaded with JFK to recall France’s devastating defeat in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu and throughout Indochina. “Within five years we’ll have 300,000 men in the paddies and jungles

and never find them again,” he warned the liberal icon in the White House. But JFK thought he knew better, caustically answering, “George, you’re crazier than hell. That just isn’t going to happen.”

Ball would also press Lyndon Johnson to stand down in Vietnam before he destroyed his presidency, domestic agenda, and more importantly the lives of tens of thousands of American soldiers and their families, not to mention a few million Southeast Asians. But LBJ wasn’t going to be the first president to lose a war and be blasted by pugnacious home-front warriors. Failing to stop the North Vietnamese would sooner or later have us fighting them on Waikiki Beach, or so the Cold War line went.

Ever since then, we have continued to hear about regional menaces that supposedly, if left unchecked, will threaten vital U.S. interests or even Americans at home. Ronald Reagan employed that rationale in defending the proxy war in Central America waged by U.S.-backed Contras. George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton extended the tradition of intervention, sending troops to theaters of combat as far-flung as Panama, Kuwait, and the Balkans, while the second Bush launched invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. They have all been war presidents.

But Barack Obama was going to be different, or so my fellow antiwar liberals—and a few antiwar conservatives—hoped. He was to herald the end of that uncompromising and unilateral era of preventive war. The hundreds of thousands who joyously greeted the presi-

dent-elect in Grant Park or the 1.5 million at his inauguration were ecstatic with anticipation. Left-wing pundits wrote excitedly about FDR’s One Hundred Days and projected great plans onto the new Man From Illinois. In countless articles, Republicans were declared brain dead, and the Bush-Cheney policies that got us into Iraq, Afghanistan, and the torture business were buried.

One year after those celebrations, it’s the neocons cheering, seeing in Obama’s policies a vindication of the late administration. Who would have dreamed that following Obama’s West Point speech announcing 30,000 more troops destined for Afghanistan, William Kristol would laud Obama in the pages of the *Washington Post*, writing, “the rationale for this surge is identical to Bush’s,” and praise the Democratic president for having “embraced the use of military force as a key instrument of national power”? War makes strange bedfellows. Michèle Flournoy, Obama’s under secretary of defense for policy, has been invited to speak about the president’s hopes for a new Afghanistan on a panel led by Frederick W. Kagan at the American Enterprise Institute, the heart of neoconservatism.

Why did Obama buy what the hawks sold him? What if he had leveled with the nation and acknowledged that, however obnoxious and cruel the Taliban may be, they pose no danger to the United States? What if he had vowed that we would not dispatch tens of thousands of additional troops to a civil war in an

agrarian, impoverished, largely illiterate country divided by tribal loyalties?

It was not to be. Instead, as *New York Times* columnist David Brooks stated approvingly, “With his two surges, Obama will more than double the number of American troops in Afghanistan.” Charles Krauthammer was direct and sharp: “most supporters of the Afghanistan war were satisfied. They got the policy; the liberals got the speech”—and no say in the construction of that policy.

After West Point and Oslo, neocons saw Obama as a more coherent Bush, an electrifying orator who had dazzled antiwar Democrats and independents and then promptly dumped them. When the *New York Times* printed a photo of the men and women who helped Obama reach his decision to escalate, not one dove was present.

Were there no alternatives? In this huge country, could he not find a handful of realists, whether Left or Right, to supply some workable ideas for eliminating third and fourth tours for our overextended troops and the resulting suicides, amputations, epidemics of post-traumatic stress disorder, and legions of weeping relatives at gravesides?

Hold on, Obama’s loyal liberal defenders counter, shuddering at the memory of Bush. Why blame him for the miserable decisions he has to make based on impossible situations he did not create? They would prefer not to explain why they and their allies in the think tanks and Congress have so little influence.

Granted, some of Obama’s base reacted negatively. In December, MoveOn.org sent its millions of members a scorching email denouncing Obama’s troop escalation for “deepen[ing] our involvement in a quagmire.” Anti-Vietnam War rebel Tom Hayden removed the Obama sticker from his car. United for Peace and Justice, the main organizer of mass peace rallies around the

country, announced, “It’s Obama’s War, and We Will Stop it.” The widely read liberal TomDispatch.com dubbed its former champion the “Commanded-in-Chief” for giving way to the hardball pressures exerted by the generals. Matthew Rothschild of *The Progressive*, founded by the fabled anti-militarist Robert M. LaFollette Sr. in 1909, compared Bush and Obama’s rhetoric and wrote an article called “Obama Steals Bush’s Speechwriters.”

But these protests notwithstanding, we remain—and will throughout Obama’s presidency—an empire of military colonization, the goal for decades of neoconservatives and assorted liberal hawks. In anthropologist Hugh Gusterson’s wonderfully evocative words, “The U.S. is to military bases as Heinz is to

died from mine explosions in 2008, noting the disconnect between Obama’s refusal to enlist the support of the government he leads and the Oslo speech in which he maintained, “I am convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do and isolates and weakens those who don’t.”

In another instance of history repeating, the first Obama defense budget has been virtually the same as Bush’s military appropriations. Obama has reduced spending on Cold War weapons such as the F-22 fighter, but he reportedly plans to ask Congress for an extra \$33 billion for the ongoing wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. To his credit, the president is trying to negotiate a new nuclear-arms reduction pact with Russia

**AFTER WEST POINT AND OSLO, NEOCONS SAW OBAMA AS A MORE COHERENT BUSH, AN ELECTRIFYING ORATOR WHO HAD DAZZLED ANTIWAR DEMOCRATS AND INDEPENDENTS AND THEN PROMPTLY DUMPED THEM.**

ketchup.” American forces are stationed at approximately 1,000 military bases in 120 countries at a cost topping \$100 billion annually. Diego Garcia, a remote island in the Indian Ocean midway between Africa and Indonesia, is apparently so essential a base that 5,000 locals were thrown out of their homes so the U.S. could have yet another top-secret facility from which to conduct its perpetual wars.

Far from being a consensus-seeking peacenik, Obama would not even sign the Landmine Ban Treaty, which Bush also refused to endorse, thus leaving the U.S. the only NATO nation unwilling to participate. Said Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch’s Arms Division, “they have simply decided to allow the Pentagon to dictate terms.” A shocked Bill Moyers pointed out that 5,000 people

and close a few of the CIA’s clandestine prisons. But in many other vital areas of defense and national security, like warrantless wiretaps and renewal of much of the Patriot Act, he persists in activities that violate fundamental freedoms. He has also refused to hold anyone from the Bush-Cheney era accountable.

There’s more: his administration has just signed an accord with Colombia granting the U.S. a ten-year right to use seven of its bases, including the centerpiece of the agreement, Palanquero AFB. Take heed, any leftist South American government that dares defy Uncle Sam. At the same time, Obama blinked at the coup d’état in Honduras. “They really thought he was different,” said Julia Sweig of the Council on Foreign Relations, referring to Latin America’s opinion of Obama. “But those hopes

were dashed over the course of the summer.”

So what happened?

Barack Obama happened. More eloquence than substance happened. More time-honored political caution than audacity or hope. Liberal and conservative Cold Warriors as key advisers. A reluctance to cross wartime profiteers. A recognition by his poll-counters that, with future elections in mind, it was best to govern from some ill-defined center, acting tough abroad to keep the neo-cons off his back while throwing an occasional bone to his left.

That strategy may buy him a second term as fruitless as his first—or it could render him indistinguishable from his deservedly maligned predecessor and cost him re-election in 2012.

The Left howls now, but from the very start, Obama signaled his lack of interest in McGovernite ideas of change in foreign policy. There was a time when he talked about pressing Israel to dismantle its settlements. But thus far he has been cowed by Netanyahu and his American backers, betraying any hope for a genuinely independent Palestinian state. There was that stirring speech in Cairo and then silence. There was talk about closing Guantanamo but no mention of the much larger Bagram prison in Afghanistan.

The sad truth is everything we are seeing we have already seen. Despite presidents who come and go, permanent war is a hallowed American institution. Start if you will with the War of 1812, the invasion of Mexico, and the carnage of a Civil War. Move to the mass murder of Native Americans and theft of their property, the killing, torture, and prison camps in the Philippines, then the blood-drenched 20th century. The 21st likewise dawns red. It never changes. Doves protest, hawks rule, ordinary people pay the penalty. All wars are “just.”

As surely as the bloodletting persists, so does the opposition. The old chestnut that liberals have always stood for peace and conservatives for war is historically false. In fact, our past is rich with anti-militarist heroes of surprisingly varied political colors. Daniel Webster opposed the War Hawks and the draft they proposed in 1812. Abolitionist Theodore Parker denounced the Mexican War and called on his fellow Bostonians in 1847 “to protest against this most infamous war.” Henry Van Dyke, a Presbyterian minister and ardent foe of the annexation of the Philippines, told his congregation in 1898, “If we enter the course of foreign conquest, the day is not far distant when we must spend in annual preparation for wars more than the \$180,000,000 that we now spend every year in the education of our children for peace.” Socialist and labor leader Eugene Debs received a ten-year prison sentence for daring to tell potential draftees in 1918 that it was “the working class who fight all the battles, the working class who make the supreme sacrifices, the working class who freely shed their blood and furnish the corpses.” Against U.S. entry into World War I, Republican Sen. George Norris of Nebraska asked, “To whom does this war bring prosperity? Not to the soldier ... not to the brokenhearted widow ... not to the mother who weeps at the death of her baby boy ... War brings no prosperity to the great mass of common and patriotic citizens ... War brings prosperity to the stock gambler on Wall Street.” Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), the only member of Congress in 2001 who voted against George W. Bush’s decision to invade Afghanistan, warned her colleagues to be “careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target.” Conservative Russell Kirk laid out a post-World War II program for conservatives by

reminding them, “A handful of individuals, some of them quite unused to moral responsibilities on such a scale, made it their business to extirpate the populations of Nagasaki and Hiroshima; we must make it our business to curtail the possibility of such snap decisions.”

Anti-militarism is very much an American tradition, but it has never been a majority position. Who now reads Finley Peter Dunne, the Chicago newspaperman who invented the brogish bartender Mr. Dooley speaking to his customer, Mr. Hennessey, while deriding American excesses and the national passion for imperial expansion? He wondered why many leaders and everyday Americans passively embraced, without much knowledge, our devotion to world hegemony—specifically in his time, the decision to invade and occupy the Philippines. “’Tis not more than two months,” he told his pro-annexation readers, “ye larned whether they were islands or canned goods.”

Yet just as certain as opposition to foreign adventuring arises, again it goes unheeded. As we begin President Obama’s second year in office, of this we can be certain: in global affairs, but for a few crumbs here and there, antiwar views will rarely be welcomed by this White House. And when these marginalized voters complain, all the president’s men will remind them that they were told Afghanistan was a “necessary war” and “national security” is everything. I can imagine Obama’s advisers confidently telling him that however many troops he ships to these and future wars, however much money he spends on military hardware, his anguished allies have no place else to go. *Plus ça change.* ■

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# Best & Brightest

From Vietnam to Palestine, George Ball got it right.

By Jordan Michael Smith

WHEN THE CENTENNIAL of George Wildman Ball's birth passed in December, there were no journalistic remembrances, no retrospectives, no essay collections published in his honor. Ball is mostly forgotten, recalled only by a few surviving colleagues from the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and players of Trivial Pursuit.

Yet Ball, who died in 1994, deserves to be remembered. He was a remarkably farsighted diplomat, who was right when almost everyone else was wrong about Vietnam, the Cuban Missile Crisis, America's relationship with Israel, the Lebanese civil war, and the Iranian Shah. If President Obama truly wants to craft a foreign policy based on what Walter Russell Mead has called "High Jeffersonianism"—engaging with the world while avoiding military entanglements—he should turn to advisers like George Ball.

The former under secretary of state was once well known in foreign-policy circles. He briefly became an antiwar hero when the Pentagon Papers revealed him as the only senior Johnson administration official opposed to the Vietnam conflict. "From the outset of the war, Ball was very consistent in his position, which was that the United States should never have been in Vietnam and would not win the war," says David DiLeo, author of *George Ball, Vietnam, and the Rethinking of Containment*. "He never wavered in that view." Many of the war's architects, including Johnson's Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and National Security Adviser

McGeorge Bundy, eventually came to regret their roles. But Ball was the only one who had it right the entire time.

His antiwar stance stemmed from his view that Europe was the chief—perhaps arguably the only—front in the Cold War. Like George Kennan, Ball had a lifelong affection for Europe and Western civilization that immunized him against fashionable utopian theories of "modernization" in the developing world. A lawyer by training, he knew and cared little about Vietnam, a fact that ironically turned out to be essential to his perspective on the war. He had enough distance to see the irrelevance to American national security of this obscure Third World country. What Ball did know about Vietnam was its recent history. He constantly reminded his colleagues of the French failure against the Viet Minh, to the point that they became annoyed at his insistence on the parallels between French and American policy.

He was a voracious reader, born in Iowa, educated at Northwestern University, and not at all intimidated by Bundy's Ivy League polish or McNamara's technocratic wizardry. He took his intellectual bearings from another Midwesterner, George Kennan, and the University of Chicago's expatriate German realist Hans Morgenthau. His chief confidant and ally in the U.S. Senate was the "Dixie Dove," Arkansas Sen. J. William Fulbright, who once hailed Ball as "the living American who had been most effective in changing things for the better."

As Murray Polner mentions earlier in this issue, in November 1961, Ball warned President Kennedy that the administration's deepening intervention in South Vietnam would sink America into a quagmire—that if JFK poured 300,000 men into the rice paddies, we would "never be able to find them." Kennedy called him "crazy"—"That just isn't going to happen." The president was correct: the U.S. soon had not 300,000 but 500,000 troops in Vietnam.

Though Ball proved to be the president's most prescient counsel, Kennedy was irritated by his confrontational approach. So Ball learned to refine his methods, concentrating on the administration's Europe portfolio and offering only occasional advice about the war in Southeast Asia.

He would truly come into his own during the Johnson administration. Between May 1964 and May 1966, crucial years in the escalation of the war, Ball produced more than 20 internally circulated papers challenging U.S. policy in Vietnam. These disputed everything about the intervention, from tactical moves in the war to the flawed assumptions underpinning it. He debunked the effectiveness of air raids and dissected the Domino Theory. "The South Vietnamese are losing the war to the Viet Cong," he wrote in a July 1965 memorandum. "No one can assure you that we can beat the Viet Cong or even force them to the conference table on our terms, no matter how many hundred thousand white, foreign troops we deploy." It was the bluntest language

President Johnson heard about Vietnam, and it came from a ranking official in his own administration. "I know that the president listened to George with respect because he called me and said, 'Do you know about this guy Ball?'" former Johnson press secretary Bill Moyers recalls. In his 1997 book *George Ball: Behind the Scenes in U.S. Foreign Policy*, James A. Bill concludes that although Ball failed to change the direction of U.S. policy in Vietnam, he at least "forced the president and his inner

headlines for a day or two, but ultimately would have had less impact on President Johnson than did his staying on as a high-level internal critic. Fulbright was alarmed at Ball's eventual departure, remarking that it left Johnson exposed to fewer contrary views. And James Bill writes that whatever doubts might be raised about the effectiveness of Ball's decision to remain in the cabinet, there are no grounds on which to question his sincerity, personal courage, and commitment to his goals.

the possibility of war, with all the dangers that that holds not only for Israel but for the United States... . The hard fact is that the national interests of the United States and of Israel cannot, in the nature of things, be precisely congruent: there will necessarily be situations in which United States policies must diverge from those of the Israeli government if our country is to be true to itself.

## WALTER LIPPMANN CONSIDERED IT AN ERROR OF UNFORGIVABLE PROPORTIONS FOR BALL TO BE PUBLICLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE WAR WHILE PRIVATELY OPPOSING IT.

circle to think through their premises and assumptions." Moyers, Dean Acheson, and Clark Clifford all credited Ball and his memos with moving them into the antiwar camp. According to Moyers, "He would marshal tremendous amounts of evidence to make the case against the war, these brilliant, long, 30-40 page memos that the president really valued as a challenge to this thinking."

As Ball's dissent on Vietnam policy became widely known, he was criticized for remaining in the administration. His friend Walter Lippmann, among others, considered it an error of unforgivable proportions for Ball to be publicly supportive of the war while privately opposing it. Critics have accused him of prioritizing access to power over his convictions. With his establishment credentials and insider knowledge, he could have provided invaluable credibility to the antiwar movement.

But Ball's defenders say the critique misunderstands his reasoning. "It was a matter of leverage," says Moyers. "As soon as he left the administration, his influence inside would have been finished." Moyers believes that Ball's resignation over Vietnam would have made

Though his shrewdness on Vietnam would earn him the esteem of Cold War historians, Ball's outspoken views on Israel and the Middle East were equally astute and even more brave. He publicly criticized the unprecedented coziness of the U.S.-Israel relationship, a move that may have cost him an appointment as secretary of state in the Carter administration. Instead of backing down, however, Ball continued to put his reputation on the line. In 1977, he published an article in *Foreign Affairs* called "How to Save Israel From Itself," which still resonates more than 30 years later:

Because many articulate Americans are passionately committed to Israel, the slightest challenge to any aspect of current Israeli policy is likely to provoke a shrill ad hominem response... . [The question] is not whether we should try to force an unpalatable peace on the Israeli people, but rather how much longer we should continue to pour assistance into Israel to support policies that impede progress toward peace and thus accentuate

In 1982, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon further convinced Ball of the folly of unconditional American support for the Jewish state. He called his last book *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement With Israel*, aptly taking his title from the warning in George Washington's Farewell Address that "nothing is more essential [for the survival of the Republic] than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded." In addition to examining the U.S.-Israel relationship and detailing the history of the Israeli-Arab conflict, Ball's book also included an explosive chapter on the Israel lobby, similar in many ways to Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer's book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, but written more than 15 years earlier.

If the unmatched sagacity of Ball's political judgment has largely gone unheralded, it has not been because of his modesty. Like almost everyone else at the top ranks of American government, Ball was deeply ambitious and didn't hesitate to promote himself. But he was also wise. As President Obama fights another protracted war in a distant land, he would do well to find an adviser as bold and prescient as George Ball. ■

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# In From the Cold

The Right should not wage a Hundred Years War.

By George W. Carey

DESPITE THE BELLICOSE rhetoric that emanates from much of the Right, opposition to the interventionist policies initiated by George W. Bush is hardly confined to libertarians and the political Left. It includes traditional conservatives—those conservatives who take their bearings from Burke and Tocqueville, who regard society as both fragile and complex, so complex that no one individual or group can ever presume to comprehend its intricacies.

Traditional conservatives are convinced that global interventions, aside from the attendant loss of life and enormous expense, hold little hope for success since the ingredients for a stable democratic order are seriously lacking in the nations we seek to reform. Key variables include vibrant and healthy intermediate social institutions and associations to serve as effective buffers against an omnipotent government; a decentralized political order in which the principle of subsidiarity is honored; deeply held convictions, religious or customary, that provide meaningful distinctions between state and society, thereby establishing limits to the range of governmental authority; and a recognition of rights with corresponding responsibilities.

While elements of traditional conservatism find expression in classical thought—Aristotle comes immediately to mind—in the American context they are found particularly in the New Humanism of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More and, after World War II, in the major writings of Russell Kirk,

Richard Weaver, and Robert Nisbet. Today, the principles of traditional conservatism inform the works of Peter Stanlis, Bruce Frohnen, and Claes Ryn, to name but a few. And until a relatively recent date, those who embrace traditionalist principles and values found a friendly home within the Republican Party.

The steadfast opposition of traditionalist conservatives to the War on Terror initiated by a Republican president stands in sharp contrast to the stance they assumed during the Cold War, when they justifiably earned an image as hardliners implacably committed to the elimination of the Soviet Union and willing to take bold measures to ensure this end. How can these seemingly inconsistent positions be reconciled?

From my perspective, as a politically aware traditional conservative during the entire Cold War era, the obvious answer is that traditionalists believed that the Soviet Union posed an unprecedented threat to the very existence of Western civilization, whereas the stakes involved in the War on Terror are nowhere near as monumental. While the Cold War called for an active and, at times, militant interventionism, handling our present difficulties requires different and far less drastic measures.

There is a dimension to the traditionalists' perspective of history that explains why they believed the Soviets posed such a historic threat. Simply put, most traditionalists have long perceived our intervention into World War I as a colossal mistake, which initiated

a chain reaction that produced World War II, which in turn set the stage for the Cold War. The traditionalists' inherent aversion to interventionism is readily seen in their longstanding and well-documented rejection of Wilson's version of American exceptionalism and in their derision of his vision of America as a "redeemer nation" with divinely ordained missions. Nevertheless, while holding that we should not have intervened in World War I, traditionalists came to conclude that we could only extricate ourselves from its disastrous consequences through intervention. Once free of the wreckage caused by Wilson's war, however, traditionalists believed we could turn away from interventionist policies and chart a new course.

Writing in 1988, Robert Nisbet contended that since the First World War, the United States had been engaged in what amounted to "a virtual Seventy-Five Years War." With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, traditionalists had every reason to believe that long war had finally come to an end. They welcomed this liberation. Not only did it open up the possibility, consonant with conservative thought stretching back at least 50 years, that we could significantly reduce our role in the world, it also allowed us a freer hand in formulating our foreign policy on the basis of genuine American interests. Above all, the Soviet collapse seemed to reduce considerably the risk of war. But this new and more limited foreign-policy vision was blotted out at its



inception by far grander visions of a New World Order.

To traditionalists' dismay, Nisbet's "Seventy-Five Years War," far from ending, will soon become the "Hundred Years War"—with no end in sight. How did this come to pass? How could a Republican administration have played such a major role in this renewed adventurism with so little resistance from within the party, particularly its congressional wing? And why have criticisms of this conservative turnabout had so little impact? After all, the doctrines used to justify our invasion of Iraq—derivatives of Wilson's vision of American exceptionalism—had been virtually the exclusive domain of the Democratic Party.

There is no simple answer. Certainly party loyalty comes into play. As I learned much to my consternation at Philadelphia Society meetings, even individuals receptive to traditional conservative views felt the need to support Republican policies and officeholders when they came under attack from Democrats. No doubt, among the Republican members of Congress, the lure of party loyalty was even more imperative. They feared that dissension would threaten their careers. Above all, they didn't want to endanger the party's chances of retaining the presidency, the gem of all elective offices given its unrivaled power to disperse wealth and honors.

Neoconservative dominance within the Republican Party is, undoubtedly, another major factor. Not only did these latecomers secure high positions in George W. Bush's administration, they came to dominate major think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, and even, to a significant extent, the liberal Brookings Institution. These institutional perches, combined with neocons' disproportionate presence in the prestige media, rendered traditionalists and

other dissidents voices in the wilderness. In stunningly swift order, the mark of "real" conservatives came to be their uncritical support of interventionist policies. Indeed, in important sectors of the political landscape, traditional conservatives are not even considered conservatives anymore.

But the single most important factor accounting for the lack of dissent within Republican ranks is the mentality created and nourished by the Cold War. During that era, individuals were habituated to think in terms of a determined enemy, an "evil empire" intent upon imposing a totalitarian order. In keeping with this state of mind was an unquestioned acceptance of aggressive foreign interventions. American exceptionalism supported and justified our militant policies. If the U.S. was "the last best hope of mankind," our crusades were inherently righteous.

Though the Soviet Union collapsed, the mindset that had been nurtured over a period of 40 years was so ingrained in our political culture that it simply could not be uprooted overnight. Nor were we given much time for reorientation, for American intervention scarcely stopped, resuming swiftly after the disintegration of the Soviet Union with the first Gulf War, whose presumed purpose was to restore "democracy" to Kuwait.

While this and other military ventures served to keep the embers glowing, the later Iraq War fully restored the fires. With the "axis of evil," we found a familiar brand of enemy. More imaginative neocons fanned the flames with a nearly endless list of potential foes, even suggesting that we were now in the midst of "World War IV"—the Cold War being World War III—a titanic struggle for the survival of Western civilization against the forces of "Islamofascism."

In retrospect, had traditionalists exercised greater prudence during the Cold War—if only by critically appraising

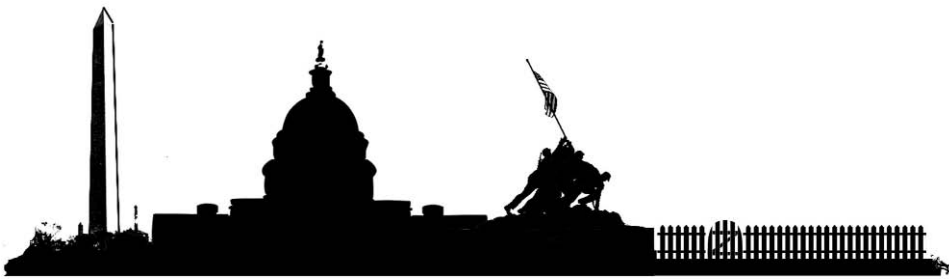
what our government was telling us about the capabilities of the Soviet Union—the chances of introducing realism into 21st-century policies might have been enhanced. At the very least, traditionalists can be faulted for accepting virtually every Cold War policy or action, including the Vietnam War, as vital to confronting the Soviet challenge. The most damaging legacy of the Cold War mentality has been the effective elimination of strategic alternatives in our foreign and military policies. As the Lyndon Johnson tapes reveal, he recognized at an early stage that disengagement from Vietnam would be the most prudent policy. Yet these tapes also show that this was a path not taken because doing so would have been an act of political suicide, given the certainty that hardline Republicans would charge LBJ and his party with being "soft on communism."

Barack Obama's Afghan policies were likely formulated against a similar backdrop. He could not show "weakness"—could not seriously consider the gradual reduction of forces as a logical course of action—for fear of the political fallout. The lamentable fact is that for decades many, if not most, Democrats have for reasons of sheer political expediency also acquiesced in following the "imperatives" dictated by the Cold War mentality.

Is there any possibility of overcoming this legacy? Perhaps, if enough Republicans and Democrats stand up to the new breed of hardline Cold Warriors. Otherwise, we will continue to fight the last war, inflating distant threats into epic enemies until such time as the American people come to their senses or run out of money. ■

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## U Turn

I walked up to U Street from Howard, trading the college-student detritus of broken ballpoints and shattered brown bottles of domestic beer for the hipster

scurf of cigarette butts. I wove through a neighborhood of narrow streets and row houses, red brick alternating with sherbet colors, passing through a low-rent patch of flea markets and island-themed takeouts. And then, without warning or boundary, I was in a hot little clutch of boutiques and restaurants. The “New U” is at least a decade old now, but it still startles me.

I always remember U Street the way it was in the '90s: a narrow spine of punk clubs and fast-food joints, dive bars and speakeasies, surrounded by abandoned hulks and haunted by men who slept on other people's steps. Some of the buildings burnt out in the King riots had never been fixed. Plants poked their flat, fringed leaves through the windows, with a tropical air of casual disregard for human projects. U Street was like a tiny outpost on a strange planet, where travelers huddled together against the hostile expanse of the past.

But I—so protected, so desperately pursuing unsafety—was happy there. I was in high school; I was still on the Left; all my friends were still friends with one another. When I think about 11th grade, it seems always sunny—a whole year made of ice cream and glitter. The next year there would be cheap teenage tragedies like breakups and two real disasters that won't be made right in this life. But for that year, I was happy.

U Street was changing. There were already a couple of shops that were like thrift stores, only too expensive for us;

we learned to call these “vintage.” There were already ritual complaints about gentrification. There were already a few storefronts with sleek aerodynamic space-age fonts.

But inside the clubs, everything was still dark, cheap, and sincere. Politics was our sex and vice versa; in an intimate corner two husky-voiced teens with dyed hair would blush at each other and fumble for words as they tried to explain their beliefs about corporations. Onstage even the most crass displays seemed to glow with the romance of political dissent: “In her kiss, I taste the revolution!” We went to shows at the Beehive Collective—yes, they called it that on purpose—where the communards silkscreened their logo onto men's dress shirts for the citoyennes to wear.

The Beehive is long gone. Was it replaced by the gay sports bar or the upscale bakery? It's impossible to navigate by the buildings, since the Beehive's building was Old U to the core, all white peeling paint and pipes exposed at random and castoff furniture in the yard.

There's no dead air around U Street now. There's a vibrant, cheapjack neighborhood snuggled cheek-to-cheek with the hipsters. Then there's this huge spray of money, like an explosion in a honeycomb, coating everything with golden ease. Every storefront is bright. The line for Ben's Chili Bowl stretches deep into the adjoining alley. (I love Ben's—it's unpatriotic not to—but I

would not wait in line in an alley for a chili dog no matter how many presidents endorsed it.) I was surprised and pleased to see that the AIDS-relief thrift shop is still standing, although it's overshadowed now. Its shuttered windows are louche and dulled amid the champagne chatter of the street. The iconic business of U Street is no longer an illicit after-hours bar; it's a pricey furniture place called Home Rule.

The last time I went to U Street for a show, it was raining, white sluicing blankets foaming out from the gutters. A girl I'd been friends with in high school is a jazz singer now, and she'd been booked at a local club. I still remembered her voice, by turns knotty and caressing, smoky and coppery. I invited some new friends, people who had never known me when I was a leftist, to come hear her sing. I walked down 16th Street under an unreliable umbrella and found that the club had been shut down for some kind of code violation. I waited in the rain. My new friends showed up, and we got beers at a cute, glossy new place. My old friend never showed; she knew the score.

Yesterday, walking home from U Street, at the outskirts of the neighborhood I passed a bookstore called Pulp. (Of course it is.) In the window a sign showed a quotation attributed to Martin Luther King: “The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be.”

It's impossible for me to miss my old extremism. It's impossible for me to feel settled in my new. ■

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# Arts & Letters

## BOOKS

[*The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft*, Russell Kirk and James McClellan, Transaction, 243 pages]

### Mr. Antiwar Republican

By Justin Raimondo

THE READER of a conservative disposition who chances upon Russell Kirk's 1967 *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft*, now reissued by Transaction Publishers and in paperback for the first time, is bound to experience that odd tingling sensation we call *déjà vu*. Arguing that the New Deal had pretty much expired—having been proved a failure—before Taft had entered the national political scene and taken his place in the U.S. Senate, Kirk and his co-author James McClellan write, "And yet for the following thirteen years, Taft found it necessary to argue incessantly with leading members of his own party as to whether the Republicans should come to terms with the allegedly triumphant New Deal. Many Republicans continued in a political trauma, shocked by their defeats of 1932 and 1936, and could think only of making concessions to the new order."

A giant leap into government control of the economy, a nation on the brink of the economic abyss, and a popular liberal Democratic president whose programs have a revolutionary air—they have been here before. Then, too, there were those on the Right who counseled retreat, accommodation, and defeatism—the David Frums of their time, who

argued that labeling FDR's panoply of government programs "socialism" was too extreme and who only served to marginalize the Republican opposition.

Taft, though not temperamentally a radical, made no bones about his opinion of the New Dealers. Many of them, he declared in a radio debate, "have no concern whatever for individual freedom. They are collectivists, like Marx and Lenin and Mussolini. They believe in planned economy; that the government should regulate every detail of industrial and commercial and agricultural life." The New Deal represented a "policy which inevitably leads to bankruptcy and inflation of the currency" and "will not only make the poor people poorer, but it is likely to force a socialism which will utterly deprive them of individual freedom."

Those were fighting words that very few in the cowed Republican opposition were willing to speak, although they may have believed them—or feared them—in their hearts. Taft rallied the GOP remnants and the beleaguered American Right under the banner of liberty and responsibility at a time when the headwinds of collectivism were blowing mightily from every direction. Around him he gathered a movement, which today is known as the Old Right—as distinguished from the "New" Right of William F. Buckley Jr. and *National Review*, which inherited from Taft and his confrères the mantle of opposition but did little to honor it. That movement is now virtually unknown or chiefly remembered by its enemies, who continue to smear it with the ignorant epithets coined by the New Dealers and their propaganda machine.

Conservatives without historical memory would seem to be a contradiction in terms, yet that is the situation in which we find ourselves some 70 years

after Taft's heyday. Conservatives seem to have forgotten their past, which is a pity because the history of their movement is rich with lessons for today, as illustrated by this modest little book.

As Kirk shows in detailing Taft's career as leader of the party's conservative wing, RINO's have always been with us: "The 'liberal,' or anti-Taft, element of the Republican party ... acted upon the assumption that the New Deal was irrevocable." While the party rank-and-file might find That Man in the White House detestable and his policies execrable, they insisted that a more accommodating public face was the key to victory at the polls. They lost consistently and miserably. Landon, Willkie, and Dewey—they were all defeated betting that principled opposition to Roosevelt's revolution was incompatible with electoral success. Three times the party's Eastern Establishment blocked Taft from getting the GOP's presidential nomination. It wasn't until Eisenhower that the moderates scored a victory, but it was the triumph of a popular military commander rather than the party. As Kirk points out, the GOP "steadily declined while Eisenhower held office—declined in Congress, and in state and local elections" and was reduced to a minority in the 1954 congressional contest. The decline continued into the 1958 elections, when the party's congressional caucus shrank to what it had been during the Roosevelt years.

When Taft died in 1953, one newspaper obituary gave voice to the despair that gripped the Old Right as it faced the smug complacency of the Eisenhower years: "Yes, Bob is gone, and there is no one to take his place," wrote the publisher of the New Bedford *Standard-Times*. "This alone is a tragedy comparable to the passing of Lincoln. But with



Bob Taft goes the Republican Party. In its place is a faceless, slinking thing, bearing only the name Republican, a name indeed which President Eisenhower hardly has mentioned since he was elected under its label.”

Certainly it was “a faceless, slinking thing” that in 2009 nominated Dede Scozzafava in New York’s 23rd congressional district—a candidate who positioned herself to the left of the Democrat and earned a well-deserved defeat after a third-party conservative entered the race.

Taft’s entry onto the national scene came too late to stop the collectivist tide on the home front but just in time to oppose FDR’s rush to war. Here is where the contemporary “conservative” reader will be shocked to discover that his intellectual and political ancestors held foreign-policy views so far removed from the Bismarckian nationalism of Fox News and the *Weekly Standard* crowd that the distance can only be measured in light years. These views are routinely derided as isolationist, but Taft’s position, as Kirk shows, could today be fairly described as realist: “In international affairs, Taft declared, the New Dealers forever tilted, like so many Quixotes, against windmills. Their objects never well defined even in their own minds, they talked of perpetual peace and the ‘Four Freedoms’; they dreamed of a universal democratic order on the American model; they conjured up stereotypes of nations, and sought to make alliances with—or wars upon—those deceptive simulacra.”

In describing the past, Kirk seems to have predicted our dreary future. Only this time, it is Republicans who are carrying the banner of a “universal democratic order on the American model.” And as for conjuring up stereotypes, what else helped motivate the neoconservative crusade to “transform” the Middle East?

Kirk continues, “Meanwhile, the principle of America’s national interest went glimmering. And while utopian fantasies occupied the imagination of the men responsible for American foreign policy,

the other powers of the world ... continued to act, to their advantage and to America’s loss, upon the ineluctable principle of *their* national interests. ... [O]nly American political leaders sincerely entertained the fallacy that foreign policy is a facile instrument of ‘moral righteousness,’ or that it somehow may open the doors to the Terrestrial Paradise.”

For Taft—and Kirk, who waxes particularly eloquent when describing Taft’s disdain for crusading “democratism”—the foundational principle of a truly conservative foreign policy is a respect for the natural limits not only of American power but of human capabilities. If, as Taft averred, “socialism will not work” because “there is no man and no group of men intelligent enough to coordinate and control the infinitely numerous and complex problems involved in the production, consumption, and daily lives of one hundred and twenty million individualistic and educated people,” then the task of coordinating and controlling a global empire would be a fool’s errand. Yet it is precisely that errand on which the fools who now call themselves conservatives—or, more precisely, neoconservatives—would have us embark.

Kirk, in his later years, had a memorable run-in with that movement in a famous lecture delivered at the Heritage Foundation. As prominent neocons sat horrified in the audience, Kirk described the members of this “political sect” as “often clever, but seldom wise.” He went on in this vein, citing a letter from a prominent Pennsylvania historian of conservative sentiments who described the then newcomers from Manhattan’s Upper West Side as “selfish and unconstructed radicals and progressives, wishing to pour cement all over the country and make the world safe for democracy, well beyond the dreams of Wilson. ... A feeling for the land, for its conservation, and for the strong modesty of a traditional patriotism (as distinct from nationalism) none of them has.”

Certainly the author of *The Conservative Mind* would have been aghast at the

sight of the neoconservatives at the helm of the United States, rampaging through the Middle East. He rightly avowed, again in that famous Heritage lecture, that while the neocons had been alert to the dangers posed by international communism, “they have been rash in their schemes of action, pursuing a fanciful democratic globalism rather than the national interest of the United States; on such occasions I have tended to side with those moderate Libertarians who set their faces against foreign entanglements. And not seldom it has seemed as if some eminent Neoconservatives mistook Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States.”

That crack earned him unremitting enmity in certain quarters: the truth hurts. Kirk had the neocons’ number, back when they were just a minor carbuncle on the general body of the conservative movement. Of them, he predicted “within a very few years we will hear no more.” If only that had come to pass—we would have been spared two ruinous wars and a third on the way. Instead of becoming “merged with the main current of America’s conservative movement,” the neocons have become the main current. One can imagine the mischievous glimmer in his eyes as the Sage of Mecosta mocked the neocons’ vainglorious pretensions: “There was published in a recent number of *Commentary* a charmingly naïve essay in which it was argued that the children and grandchildren of extant Neoconservatives would come to form a Sacred Band, calling themselves Neoconservatives life long, and ruling the American roost. This dream ignores the fact that things initially new do not long remain new: everything ages; yesteryear’s novelty ceases to charm.”

They don’t quite rule the American roost, yet that Sacred Band has indeed founded an ideological dynasty, one that, having driven the conservative movement and, with it, the Republican Party into the ground, now presides over the mutant remnants of what had once been the party of Taft. Kirk would have been horrified, to say nothing of

Taft—and the feeling of antipathy would no doubt be mutual. What appalls the neocons about Taft and his friends is that the Old Right steadfastly opposed U.S. entry into World War II. To the neocons, for whom it is always 1939, this is an impermissible heresy. Yet in the conservative movement of the 1960s, when Kirk's study of Taft first came out, it was uncontroversial that a leading conservative scholar would casually and approvingly describe Taft's opposition to the war as being rooted in "two prejudices (using that word in its neutral sense): his prejudice in favor of peace, and his prejudice against empire—that is, against American aspirations of hegemony over much of the world."

Modern "conservatives" who come upon this quotation sans attribution would doubtless hear some "America-hating" leftist talking. Learning that

these are the words of a founding father of their movement should cause a few heads to explode.

These views were unremarkable to the conservatives of not so long ago for the simple reason that they followed logically from the worldview of those who wanted to limit the power and size of government and preserve the centrality of what Kirk called "the permanent things." For Kirk and for Taft, war "was the enemy of constitution, liberty, economic security, and the cake of custom." It had to be the very last resort, not only because it "would make the American President a virtual dictator, diminish the constitutional powers of Congress, contract civil liberties, injure the habitual self-reliance and self-government of the American people, distort the economy," and "sink the federal government in debt" but also because it would "break in upon private and public morality," destroying the very basis of our Christian civilization. The damage it would inflict "might require generations for the nation to recover"—like a brief but near-lethal encounter with pneumonia or cancer marks one for years—even if it was "a war of a few years' duration."

After eight years of constant warfare—occasioned by deception, a regime of torture, and a wholesale assault on the Constitution and what remains of our civil liberties—it is difficult to see how we can hope to come out of it (if we ever come out of it) with our sense of humanity intact, let alone our old Republic. The damage could well be permanent, and, in any case, it may be a horse race between the healing process and the time we have left before we're driven into bankruptcy.

Taft opposed U.S. entry into World War II for all of the reasons given above and for his belief that the Soviet Union posed a far greater threat—an internal one, as well as an external military one—than Nazi Germany. In spite of the Roosevelt administration's smear campaign against war opponents, which tied them to a pro-Nazi "fifth column," the reality was that the German ideology had little or no appeal inside the United

States. That, as the Red Decade of the 1930s showed, did not apply to the Soviets, who had plenty of friends here, including some in high places. Taft believed we had to deal first and foremost with the Soviets.

After the war, however, he did not, like many conservatives, jump on the Cold War bandwagon. He retained his principled anti-interventionist stance, albeit not always consistently, opposing the formation of NATO, questioning the concept of collective security, opposing the "victor's justice" of the Nuremberg trials, and criticizing Truman's decision to send troops to Korea without congressional approval—although he supported the effort once the troops were in the field. He attacked the growing power of the president to send troops anywhere, at any time, without consulting Congress—a precedent Truman set, which has had unfortunate consequences visited upon us to this day. It didn't matter that Truman had the sanction of the United Nations Security Council; what he really needed was the consent of Congress, which he never sought until the troops had already arrived. If this were allowed, Taft maintained, then "on the same theory he could send troops to Tibet to resist Communist aggression or to Indo-China or to anywhere else in the world." A few years later, the first American "advisers" would be sent to Indo-China to help the French secure their colonies—naturally without Congress's consent—and a disastrous chapter in the history of U.S. interventionism started.

In an era when radio-shouters, vulgar hucksters, and out-and-out charlatans have taken the spotlight on the American Right, conservatives need to remember their past—to get back in touch with their roots. While the conservative movement is cut adrift, looking for an anchor, what could be better than the principled prudence of these two nearly forgotten giants, Kirk and Taft? ■

*Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com.*

## MOVING?

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[*Bright-sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*, Barbara Ehrenreich, Metropolitan Books, 256 pages]

## Have a Nice Day — Or Else

By Florence King

IF YOU HAVE EVER BEEN sitting quietly in a public place, minding your own business, only to have a perky thug gambol up to you and bray, “Whatcha so sad about? It can’t be that bad—smile!” this is the book for you. Barbara Ehrenreich is a liberal but a refreshingly grumpy one, equipped with a gimlet eye that stares down the national Smile Button and makes it blink in this relentless exposure of America’s resolve to look on the bright side at all cost.

A personal crisis led her to the subject. She was diagnosed with breast cancer and began treatment, entering into a world within a world where a half-full glass runneth over and everything is pink. The changing room for mammogram patients was bedecked with pink ribbons, pink artificial roses, sentimental verse and cute sayings photocopied on pink paper, and of course, pink teddy bears. The gift shop carried pink pajamas, aprons, coffee mugs, candles, cancer diaries, pink pens to write them, more and bigger teddy bears, and even pink wind chimes. All this “pink sticky sentiment ... oozing from the walls” made Ehrenreich long “for a clean and honorable death by shark bite, lightning strike, sniper fire, car crash.”

Like all mass enthusiasms, positive thinking coins irritating words like “wellness.” The upbeat vocabulary stuck in her craw. No one ever spoke of “victims” or even “patients.” The operative word was “survivor,” making support groups sound like AA meetings when speakers introduced themselves with “I’m a three-year survivor.” Nobody merely had

cancer; they were “battling” it, and they expected to defeat it because they were convinced that a positive attitude could make cancer give up and go away. Some of the upbeat optimism they expressed verged on the insane: “Cancer is a gift,” “Cancer makes you grow as a person,” “I realized that the source of my happiness was, of all things, cancer,” “If I had it to do over, would I want breast cancer? Absolutely.”

The emphasis placed on industrial-strength cheerfulness also led to victim blaming (“If you got cancer, you must have wanted it”) and self-punishing guilt (“If I get sad, or scared or upset, I am making my tumor grow faster and I will have shortened my life”). Ehrenreich soon discovered that “dissent [is] a kind of treason.” One day she posted hers on an online message board and heard back: “You need to run, not walk, to some counseling.”

A classic feminist would dismiss the Pink Cancer as the infantilization of women and the inability of the male-dominated medical profession to deal with the double-whammy of the breast as a symbol of both sexuality and maternity, but Ehrenreich fingers a practical reason for the trend. If enough people insist on believing that an optimistic

By the 19th century, Calvinism had lost its hold, replaced by “New Thought,” a blend of Emerson’s Transcendentalism and Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science that saw God not as a vengeful deity but as a metaphysical power incorporating Thought, Mind, Spirit, Goodness, and Love. According to Eddy, there was no such thing as illness; it was a temporary delusion, an “error.” She was right to a point. Christian Science had no effect on infectious diseases or somatic ravages, but it did make headway in curing “neurasthenia,” the 19th-century name for hysteria, depression, anxiety, and insomnia—i.e., the nervous disorders and personality problems caused by too much Calvinism. Americans discovered that being upbeat did help, and so positive thinking took root in the national psyche.

Unfortunately, the American obsession with bigger ‘n’ better led to bigger ‘n’ better positive thinking, especially in those ever fertile fields of prosperity and the American Dream. Enter the self-help books, such as *Think and Grow Rich!* (1937) by Napoleon Hill, who explained how a go-getter could manipulate his subconscious mind. Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) taught us, says Ehrenreich, “how to fake sincerity” in order to

BARBARA EHRENRICH IS EQUIPPED WITH A GIMLET EYE THAT STARES DOWN THE NATIONAL SMILE BUTTON AND MAKES IT BLINK IN THIS RELENTLESS EXPOSURE OF AMERICA’S RESOLVE TO LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE AT ALL COST.

frame of mind strengthens the immune system, it will create “expanded opportunities” in the cancer research and treatment field for behavioral scientists in search of grants.

Positive thinking is as American as the *Mayflower*. But Ehrenreich traces it back to its opposite, the Calvinism of early settlers, wherein the sinner looked for sins as the cancer patient looks for lumps. In either case the result is the same: morbid introspection, self-loathing, harsh judgmentalism, and relentless efforts to stamp out “negative thoughts.”

rise in the white-collar world. Finally and inevitably, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) by Norman Vincent Peale made it official: negative thoughts were effectively declared unconstitutional.

The machinery is now in place for bullying and controlling the faux middle-class—Ehrenreich calls it the “white-collar proletariat”—that the obsessive pursuit of the American Dream has created. But now there is something more to pursue: the changing nature of workplace success. The



objects of labor are no longer physical things—equipment and the like—but people. The “soft skills” of interpersonal relations are vital to getting the job done. Most of us work with people, for people, or, like salesmen, on people. “We have become the emotional wallpaper in other people’s lives, less individuals with our own quirks and needs than dependable sources of smiles and optimism” who must work “on the self in order to make that self more acceptable and even likeable to employers, clients, coworkers, and potential customers.”

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION HAS **RECENTLY RECOGNIZED**  
**“POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY” AS A VALID DISCIPLINE**, AND IT IS EVEN MAKING  
 HEADWAY IN ACADEMIA, WHERE IT IS INCREASINGLY BEING CALLED  
**“THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS.”**

Panicked by the economic downturn and the specter of tumbling back down the ladder of success, the white-collar proletariat will do anything to hang on, and the positive-thinking industry stands ready to make it “see the glass half full, even when it lies shattered on the floor.”

Ehrenreich’s account of how it does so is bleakly funny. Basically, it’s the Pink Cancer all over again. Salesmen attend mandatory training seminars where “life coaches” yell, “I DARE YOU TO DEVELOP A WINNING PERSONALITY!” and the salesmen yell back, “I FEEL GREAT!” Motivational speakers tell them that the recession is nothing but a mass outbreak of pessimism and urge them to “resonat[e] in tune with the universe. ... Think the thought Yes. ... Say ‘I love you’ in your head at all times so that we can heal all that needs to be healed.” Blunter motivational speakers get right into it in the opening sentence of their speeches, like the one who belted, “Negative People SUCK!” For white-collar proletarians who like to read, there’s *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne, who assures us that we can “attract” what we want merely by thinking about it because positive thoughts

create vibrations that enable us to manipulate the physical universe. Ehrenreich likens this to sticking pins in voodoo dolls.

And if, after attending all the weekend retreats, tribal pathfindings, and Buddhist vision quests, you still get fired, you should think of it as the best thing that ever happened to you because it’s not called “fired” anymore. It’s a “release of resources.” If you need comforting you can always go to church, but beware: the positive-thinking industry has invaded the sanctuary with the mes-

sage that “God wants to prosper you.” The Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, California is pastored by Robert H. Schuller, who preaches, “Never verbalize a negative emotion,” while Houston boasts a megachurch led by the oleaginous Joel Osteen, who advises his flock to reprogram their minds with positive images to activate the law of attraction so they can draw in whatever they think about—i.e., Ye shall be as magnets.

Lest you think that positive thinking too shall pass, guess again. The American Psychological Association has recently recognized “positive psychology” as a valid discipline, and it is even making headway in academia, where it is increasingly being called “the science of happiness.” Some 200 colleges and graduate schools now offer courses in it (called “Happiness 101” by some undoubtedly negative types), and efforts are afoot to get it into public schools.

Ehrenreich blames some of the mortgage meltdown on the forays into positive thinking by Joe Gregory, former president of the former Lehman Brothers investment bank, and Angelo Mozilo, CEO of Countrywide Financial, the company that almost single-handedly set off the subprime crisis. Both men

hired motivational speakers and believed in Wall Street’s favorite fortune-cookie sentiment, “Crisis is opportunity.” Gregory was called “warm and fuzzy,” “a Feeler with a capital F,” and “Mr. Instinct.” Mozilo won the Horatio Alger Award for his “hard work, determination, and positive thinking,” which explains why he replied, “You worry too much,” when one of his vice presidents expressed alarm over steadily rising housing prices. Anyone who tried to apply rational analysis to financial decisions was chided for “intellectualizing” and, if he persisted, was ostracized. Positive thinkers did not worry about these things because the market was self-correcting. It achieved the status of a deity, Ehrenreich deadpans, “closely related to Mary Baker Eddy’s benevolent, ever-nurturing, and all-supplying universe.”

She does a convincing, highly readable job of weaving the economic turn-down into her theme, but she omits one vital factor: “red-lining.” For years the federal government has been pressuring banks to grant mortgages to risky borrowers or else be accused of racism. Ehrenreich speaks of “low-income” or “disadvantaged” borrowers but she never mentions race per se, even though political correctness is just another version of positive thinking.

She leaves us with the apt reminder that brutal authoritarian regimes always demand unflagging optimism from their citizens. Pessimism is “ideological wavering,” pessimists are “defeatists,” and they tend to disappear. Ehrenreich herself is no pessimist—though you would never know it from her book titles: *Fear of Falling* is about the middle class, *Bait and Switch* is about the American Dream, and *Nickel and Dimed* is about service jobs—but in a country hooked on positive thinking, she may end up as the American Cassandra. As far as I’m concerned, she shares a cachet with George Orwell: the conservative’s favorite liberal writer. ■

*Florence King is the author of 12 books, including Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady.*

[*Strange Days Indeed: The 1970s: The Golden Age of Paranoia*, Francis Wheen, *PublicAffairs*, 352 pages]

## Sinister '70s

By Brendan O'Neill

READING *Strange Days Indeed*, British writer Francis Wheen's rollercoaster romp through the 1970s, made me glad that I am too young to remember that doom-laden decade, having only been born halfway through it.

The nostalgia industry may recently have got its grubby mitts on this most peculiar 10-year period in modern history, re-presenting it as a gloriously un-PC decade in which men wore kipper ties and swore a lot ("Life on Mars") and women leapt around like menopausal kangaroos while singing ABBA songs ("Mamma Mia"). But that says far more, Wheen convincingly argues, about the history-warping, money-making opportunism of the nostalgists than it does about the reality of life in the 1970s.

For this, he reckons, was a decade not of song, dance, and abandon, but of fear, paranoia, and political madness. It was a decade that kicked off with Richard Nixon moaning about the threat posed by "homosexuality, dope and immorality in general" and ended with the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and the revolutionary victory of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. The grocer's daughter and the imam had something in common, Wheen notes: both wanted to turn back the clock, Thatcher to the Victorian era of "self-help, private philanthropy and *laissez faire*," Khomeini to the era of the Islamic Caliphate.

In between Nixon's paranoia and the rise of Thatcher and Islamo-fundamentalism, there were guerrilla warfare, strikes, conspiracies and also conspiracy theories, green extremism, the rise of neo-Malthusianism, an increase in state surveillance, a new era of "claustrophobic cinema," punk, nihilism, and a general, free-floating feeling of fear and dread that, Wheen says, was best expressed by Chair-

man Mao's wife in 1971: "I have been feeling as if I am going to die any minute, as if some catastrophe is about to happen tomorrow. I feel full of terror all the time."

Was the decade really so dark? Why was it a fertile breeding ground for fear, conspiracy theory, and some of today's most backward, stifling, and now orthodox political outlooks, including misanthropic environmentalism? Wheen paints a Hieronymus Bosch-style picture of a decade in which a British prime minister hysterically described himself as "a big fat spider in the corner of the room" who was being followed by secret services and an American president covered up a break-in to try to save his political skin. Unfortunately, he is weaker on the "why": he never completely analyzes where the widespread sense of paranoia came from or what, ultimately, it expressed.

The main thing about the 1970s, for Wheen and most historians, is that they were not the 1960s. Dropping out of the rat race was replaced by conspiratorially imagining that The Man wanted to kill us all. The hippie anthems of The Mamas and The Papas were replaced by the harsh tones of Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, and David Bowie, who said in 1976, "I believe Britain could benefit from a fascist leader." And the running street battles between students, professors, and Panthers and the powers that be were replaced by the bombings of miniscule yet mayhem-creating terror groups such as the Baader-Meinhof Gang and Weatherman, nicely described by Wheen as products of the "defeats of 1968." Indeed, the Seventies can be seen as the big fat comedown from the decade of peace and love and experimentation. (Though, lest we forget, our image of the Sixties is also a product as much of nostalgia as reality.)

Wheen felt the Not-the-Sixties nature of the Seventies more acutely than most. He was brought up in the bosom of privilege and educated at Harrow, Prince Charles's alma mater. Like many advantaged young Brits with time on their hands—and disposable income to spend on pop singles such as The Groundhogs' bizarre peace anthem "Thank Christ for the Bomb"—he became a hippie.

"Wishy-washy liberal," he'd say, when asked by friends to define his political outlook. In 1973, he sneaked out of the family home in dull suburban Kent, leaving a note telling his parents that he was "off to join the alternative society" and would not be back.

But to Wheen's surprise, and disappointment, the alternative society was no more. Arriving at a hippie hangout in West London that he had read about in the underground press, the 16-year-old announced, "Hi, I've dropped out," only to be told, "Drop back in, man. You're too late. It's over."

That feeling of "it" being over—"it" being the something-or-other about the 1960s that made them so apparently sexy and exciting—was palpable for Wheen's too-late generation. Wheen runs through various theories about when "the Sixties" ended. For Joan Didion, it was Aug. 9, 1969, the night Charles Manson's disciples murdered Sharon Tate and four others. For Kenneth Tynan, it was March 9, 1971, when Muhammad Ali—that "epitaph of the Sixties: flair, audacity, imagination, outrageous aplomb"—was defeated by the "stubborn, obdurate" Joe Frazier. For Edward D. Berkowitz, it was April 30, 1974, the day Nixon released the profanity-strewn transcripts from recorded conversations at the White House, ending "the postwar presidential mystique." Yet while the birthdate of the Seventies is debatable, says Wheen, the flavor of those years should be clear: "A pungent mélange of apocalyptic dread and conspiratorial fever."

Politically, culturally, and academically, there was an atmosphere of anti-hope, a future-fearing sense of dread, he says. In the U.S., it was embodied in Nixon, the anti-Kennedy, a politician with a sweating, gurning face better suited to the gramophone era than the TV age, who, Wheen strongly hints, was mad. As the Sixties ended and the Seventies began, Nixon was "dreaming up policies at five in the morning," says Wheen, including his plan to bomb the living daylight out of Cambodia: "They say the darkest hour is just before the dawn, and caliginous thoughts often swirled through [Nixon's] murky,

insomniac mind as he lay awake fretting about his waning leadership quotient and brooding on his colleagues' disloyalty."

In Britain, Wheen believes, the paranoia was best embodied in Harold Wilson (Labour prime minister from 1964-70 and 1974-76) and some of his colleagues. Sir William Armstrong, the "most powerful man in Whitehall," was so paranoid that he would frequently only meet in places that were definitely not bugged, "stripp[ing] off his clothes and lay[ing] on the floor, chain-smoking and expostulating wildly about the collapse of democracy and the end of the world." Wilson was not much saner, says Wheen. A few weeks after resigning in 1976 he gave his infamous "big fat spider" interview: "Occasionally when we meet I might tell you to go to the Charing Cross Road and kick a blind man standing on the corner. That blind man may tell you something, lead you somewhere." Eh?

Of course, the Seventies saw economic and political upheaval in much of the developed world. There was an oil crisis, recession, and war (in Vietnam and Cambodia for America; in Northern Ireland for Britain). In the UK, the Seventies started, under Ted Heath's Conservative government, with severe inflation measures and wage freezes, which led to standoffs between the government and trade unions. In response to the 1974 coal miners' strike, Heath's government introduced the Three-Day Week, when electricity could only be used for three specified consecutive days a week. The blackouts and the candlelit homes and offices exacerbated a powerful sense of imminent societal collapse.

In the realm of ideas, too, the impression of things falling apart was widespread. This was a period when deep ecology—modernity-hating, backward-looking ecology—rose from the swamp of bad ideas and dug its nails into mainstream debate. British billionaire Teddy Goldsmith, who founded *The Ecologist*, said in 1971 that Britain was heading back to feudalism: "People will gather round whichever strong men can provide the basic necessities of life and offer protection against marauding

bands from the dying cities." On the first Earth Day in 1970, American academic Peter Gunter predicted, "By the year 2000, the entire world, with the exception of Western Europe, North America and Australia, will be in famine." Population scaremonger Paul Ehrlich added, with a curious combination of nonchalance and hysteria, "I'm 37 and I'd kind of like to live to be 67 in a reasonably pleasant world and not die in some kind of holocaust in the next decade."

While all this is eye-opening, jaw-dropping, and at times, yes, funny, Wheen's excavation of the madder moments of the 1970s relies too much on paranoia, on the notion that people and politicians had lost the plot and gone "off their rockers." Of the small left-wing terror groups that preferred bombing to thinking, Wheen says, "Nihilist hyperbole and exaggerated fury filled the analytical void." True. But there are moments in *Strange Days Indeed* when Wheen's almost psychotherapeutic conviction that politicians and others went barmy in the Seventies also fills an "analytical void," substituting for a more profound explanation of the political content and nature of that turbulent decade.

This creates two problems in an otherwise fine book. First, Wheen sometimes tries (and ultimately fails) to explain major political crises and events through the foibles or tendency to paranoia of the participants. So of Northern Ireland, where a war between the British Army and the Provisional Irish Republican Army raged throughout the 1970s, he says there was an "insanity" that was "contagious," where crazy IRA men and unhinged British politicians did stupid and self-destructive things. Here a 25-year conflict over sovereignty and territory, at its most violent in the 1970s, is depicted as little more than an outbreak of speedily spreading madness. The standoff between miners and government is also discussed mostly through the personality traits and stubbornness of the trade union leaders and Conservative politicians involved, which overlooks the political and deeply class-based nature of that clash. And is it really enough to describe Nixon as a lip-sweating lunatic who paced the corridors

of the White House? After all, there were very real and very rational pressures on the president. His armed forces were losing to an army of liberation in Southeast Asia, and he faced loud and sometimes rowdy political opposition at home. If Nixon was "on the edge," it might be because his enormous opposition pushed him there.

Second, to the extent that some Western leaders did express themselves in a "paranoid style," fretting openly about being followed or about the collapse of democracy and the end of the world, Wheen doesn't fully explain why. The Seventies were a period of profound moral and political crisis for Western ruling elites—not only because they faced economic recession and political opposition, but also because, perhaps for the first time in the 20th century, they lacked any convincing moral arguments to help them withstand challenges to their authority. The Sixties exposed that the emperor, the rulers of Western societies, had no clothes; their way of life, their traditions, their culture, their history had been called into question by the tumultuous events of the 1960s (and indeed the 1950s and '40s, too), from the universities of West Coast America to the universities of Paris and Hamburg, from the streets of Chicago to the streets of Rome. This left Western leaders bereft of ideas and lost for words by the 1970s, meaning they experienced opposition as something terrifying, imagining that the world could collapse at any minute. In such circumstances, a strike becomes the harbinger of social collapse, a rowdy protest hints at the end of the world, and a bomb planted by disgruntled middle-class dropouts in Germany signals the potential end of civilization. Indeed, as Wheen himself says of Baader-Meinhof & Co., in the 1970s "even the tiniest band of desperadoes could paralyse a nation"—not because they were strong, but because the elites, denuded of their traditions, lacking in any inspiring new ideas, were weak politically, morally, and institutionally. ■

Brendan O'Neill is editor of *spiked* in London ([www.spiked-online.com](http://www.spiked-online.com)).



[*SuperFreakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance*, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, William Morrow, 288 pages]

## Conventional Wisdom, the Sequel

By John Payne

WHEN *Freakonomics* was released in 2005, it achieved the unthinkable by inspiring a massive interest in applied economics among a popular audience. The book's authors, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, accomplished this bizarre feat by using economic logic and statistical analysis to catch teachers cheating and explain crack dealers staying in the dope game when they make less money than McDonald's employees.

Levitt and Dubner have now returned with a sequel bearing the painfully obvious title *SuperFreakonomics*. (I wonder if the estate of Rick James will be seeking compensation.) The book is already a bestseller, but it is clear that Levitt and Dubner did not hold any of their "A" material back from the original. *SuperFreakonomics* is well written, with a number of intriguing ideas and a solid thesis—even if its authors seem to be unaware of it for most of the book—but it is ultimately a disappointment, with many of its insights being less than freaky.

In a brief explanatory note at the beginning of *SuperFreakonomics*, the authors write that although they claimed in the original that the stories had no unifying theme, they came to realize that a thread was there: "People respond to incentives"—perhaps the most basic premise in all of economics. While this idea runs through the sequel as well, there is another one that unites

much of this book, though Levitt and Dubner never make it explicit: every age has problems that must be solved through human ingenuity and technological innovation, but these solutions create problems of their own that perpetuate the cycle.

For instance, at the end of the 19th century, the horse was the primary means of transportation for the affluent in American cities. The thought strikes most modern audiences as romantic and quaint, but Levitt and Dubner point out the multitude of negative externalities associated with movement by steed: feeding the animals drove up food prices; their manure and even rotting carcasses filled the streets, offending the senses and spreading disease; and numerous pedestrians were trampled to death by the enormous creatures. These problems were solved by the invention and rapid spread of the automobile, which ran on cheap gasoline, did not leave solid waste in the streets, and was far easier to control than its equine predecessor. Yet we may now be facing a new danger brought on, in part, by the use of automobiles: global warming.

It is the chapter on solving this problem that has stirred the most controversy. The authors accept that the globe is warming (although they point out that scientists were worried about global cooling 30 years ago) and that it is caused to a large degree by human activity. They are in the sights of environmentalists for having the temerity to suggest that global warming might be better handled through technological innovation than by attempts to make unrealistic cuts in carbon output. In other words, they argue that humanity should attack global warming the same way we have successfully attacked every other major environmental problem our species has faced.

Levitt and Dubner argue that pumping sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere above the poles should form a protective blanket to reflect sunlight and cool the planet. Their critics respond that the idea is fanciful and could lead to

unintended consequences, such as the further acidification of the oceans, but that criticism misses the point. Although they focus on the sulfur dioxide idea, Levitt and Dubner do not present it as the only possible solution to global warming, nor do they deny that any geo-engineering scheme will create its own problems. What they do argue is that human ingenuity is equal to the challenge of global warming and any subsequent challenges that solution causes.

Perhaps the book's most interesting chapter deals with research on altruism (although I'm sure Adam Smith—author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in addition to *The Wealth of Nations*—would have an objection to Levitt and Dubner's assertion that economists before the mid-20th century were unconcerned with altruism). To test altruism in a laboratory setting, economists developed a game called Dictator that gave one player \$20 and allowed him to split the money evenly with another, anonymous player or give the other player just \$2. Economists were surprised to discover that most players divided the money evenly; it seemed to undermine the assumption of rational self-interest that underlies neoclassical economics. This widespread and naturally occurring altruism also seemed hard to square with the abundance of selfish behavior witnessed by even the most casual observer of the human condition.

The obvious discrepancy interested economist John List, so he redesigned the experiment in numerous ways to make the players' options more realistic. List quickly found that people were not nearly as altruistic when given more choices. When offered the additional option of taking a dollar from the second player, for instance, only a third of players gave money to the second participant, while the others either gave nothing or took a dollar. Most interestingly, when List made both participants work for the money they used to play the game by stuffing envelopes, two-thirds of the participants did not

give to or take from the second player. This suggests that when people believe that they have earned their money and other people have done the same, they feel bound by a natural sense of property rights.

Unfortunately, most of the other chapters are not nearly as interesting, despite the authors' best attempts to be provocative. For example, the first chapter deals heavily with prostitution, which would seem to be a market rife with outlandish behavior, but most of the information is far from revelatory. Beyond the disturbing fact that a Chicago prostitute is more likely to have sex with a police officer—usually in exchange for protection of her business—than to be arrested by him, Levitt and Dubner's supposed bombshells are well known and intuitive. The duo seems puzzled by the dramatic fall in the price of oral sex from the 19th century to the present day, but it is no secret that the act has gone from being taboo to something not even considered sex by at least one former president, ergo the supply has risen, driving the price down dramatically. This tidbit of licentiousness does demonstrate one of the basic laws of economics, but it is hardly some esoteric secret.

Levitt and Dubner's discussion of healthcare fares somewhat better, but it is still relatively conventional and misses an opportunity to discuss more radical ideas. The authors freely admit that much of the system seems to be ineffective. The particular doctor a patient is assigned to in an emergency room is not nearly as important as the patient's gender or income level when it comes to predicting mortality. Chemotherapy appears to be futile at battling a number of different cancers. Levitt and Dubner even present anecdotal evidence that mortality rates go down when doctors are suddenly absent. So why do we spend so much of our incomes on healthcare when it does not appear to make that great a difference? Levitt and Dubner suggest several possibilities, including doctors seeking higher compensation for performing

more services and doctors perhaps fooling themselves into believing their efforts are more effective than they really are.

This is engaging as far as it goes, but the chapter could have benefited greatly from a discussion of the ideas of George Mason University economist Robin Hanson, who argues that healthcare, along with most aspects of our lives, is primarily about signaling certain qualities to other people. According to Hanson, the reason people spend so much money on healthcare is simply to signal that they care about the person receiving treatment; effectiveness is beside the point. Hanson believes that this was evolutionarily advantageous for our ancestors because early humans needed to know upon whom they could rely when they were sick or otherwise disabled. If caveman Oog tended to caveman Ug when he was ill, it could cement an alliance between Oog and Ug and, with any luck, guarantee that Ug would care for Oog when the shoe was on the other foot. Whether Oog's treatments actually cause Ug to get better is secondary to the fact that Oog expended costly time and effort on Ug. Hanson argues that this need to signal is as strong as ever and compels people to seek out the costliest treatments for their loved ones, even if they are no more (or even less) effective than cheaper ones. Definitively proving Hanson's thesis would be an exceedingly difficult if not impossible task, but surely it's worth mentioning in a book that seeks to expose readers to unconventional ideas.

Like most sequels to unexpected blockbusters, *SuperFreakonomics* seems more like an effort to cash in on the good name of the original than a thought-out work in its own right. That may be disappointing, but it is not entirely unexpected. After all, even economists respond to incentives. ■

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*[War, Revenue, and State Building: Financing the Development of the American State, Sheldon D. Pollack, Cornell University Press, 328 pages]*

## An Empire, If You Can Keep It

By Justin Logan

PERIODICALLY, it is worth remembering just how much the American Founders detested the signs of a bloated state: standing armies, a large fiscal-military federation, and a capacious national bureaucracy. It may be going too far to say that today's conservatives would denounce the Founding Fathers as unpatriotic conservatives—but not much too far. While members of the Right now flutter like schoolgirls at the mention of military leaders like Gen. David Petraeus, the Founders scorned the prospect of military leaders becoming figures of worshipful esteem. As the historian Arthur Ekirch has highlighted, aversion to standing armies and centralism was at the heart of the American founding.

In 1783, Revolutionary War veteran Aedanus Burke warned, "military commanders acquiring fame ... are generally in their hearts aristocrats, and enemies to the popular equality of a republic." John Randolph saw no serious threats to the Republic and accordingly denounced the Army as "loungers, who live upon the public, who consume the fruits of their honest industry, under the pretext of protecting them from a foreign yoke." Randolph sneered at the idea that a country of virtuous and self-sufficient republicans would be forced to seek "the protection of a handful of ragamuffins." Benjamin Rush suggested placing signs above the entrance to the Department of War reading "An office for butchering the human species" and "A Widow and Orphan making office."

The early Republic had a high tolerance for danger. The British had set fire

to the White House during the War of 1812 and remained in North America openly refusing to comply with the terms of the Treaty of Ghent. (One might compare the gravity of this threat to that posed by Afghanistan's own "handful of ragamuffins" today.) Even so, the U.S. Army was slashed in size from roughly 47,000 men during the war to less than 10,000 after it. This tiny force accounted for more than three-fourths of federal spending at the time.

We've come a long way. Today people who call themselves conservatives promote endless nation-building projects overseas. They endorse a gross imbalance of power at the domestic level, pitting a sorry, supine Congress against a super-empowered, quasi-regal presidency and administrative state. They shrug at flamboyant federal spending and hew to an American identity that is rooted more in worship of the state than in republican humility and deference to God.

How did this happen? How did a decentralized Republic become a homogenized, staggering titan bestriding the globe and attempting to transform everything from the social conduct of Iraqi families to the business practices of American banks, car companies, and healthcare providers?

The factor that explains the largest share of the centralism and growth of the American state is war. In *War, Revenue, and State Building: Financing the Development of the American State*, Sheldon D. Pollack, professor and director of the Legal Studies Program at the University of Delaware, sets out to trace war's role in facilitating that expansion. The book is a synthetic account that includes a review of the scholarly literature on state building in Europe, a sweep through (mostly secondary) sources describing the founding of the American state, and a third section detailing the growth of the fiscal-military state from the Civil War onward. Given the extensive existing literature and the broader and deeper treatments of these subjects by scholars such as Otto Hintze, Frederic Lane, Charles Tilly, Bruce Porter, Robert Higgs, and many

others, however, one searches mostly in vain for value added beyond the book's use as a roadmap of existing literature.

The very lack of controversy over the book's central claim proves the point. How many would argue with the thesis that the "remarkable institutional transformation" of the American state "would not have been possible but for the revenue raised through a particularly efficient system of public finance devised by national political leaders during the Civil War and subsequently resurrected and perfected in the early twentieth century"?

Pollack's account of the rise of the American state can be summarized as follows. Founded on "the dubious principle that tyrannical political power can be checked by denying the central government all the fundamental powers and attributes of stateness," the American state was crippled by "structural defects" that made the early American Republic a "failure." The need to band together to resist the threat from Britain forced the decision to unify the 13 former colonies into a confederacy. Even so, "the medieval princes of twelfth-century Europe were better equipped to raise revenue for their armies."

Even with its limited capacities, Congress begged and borrowed enough for the effort to defeat the Crown and founded a sovereign state with the ratification of the Constitution in 1787. The exertions of Alexander Hamilton helped overcome early politicians' aversion to centralized power, and set in place the institutions that would ultimately yield a more unitary American state.

The critical periods of government growth occurred during the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. Pollack offers a catalog of statistics that reflects the growth in administrative capacity and expenditures during these conflicts. He rightly keys in on the income tax, formally adopted in 1861, as a watershed in American state building. The Union government looked like the fiscal-military state of Great Britain, but the Confederacy's revenue strategy more neatly resembled tribute-taking empires such as Russia, lending a decisive advantage

to the North in the military contest between the two armies.

Pollack offers a useful discussion of how the growth of pensions for Union veterans laid the foundation for the administrative state. Originally paying only disabled veterans, widows, and orphans, Congress expanded the pension system to include "dependent fathers and brothers," then again to pay Union veterans who had served for at least 90 days and were disabled—whether related to the war or not. Enabled by budget surpluses, Republicans began using pensions as party-building measures.

The author's account of World War I brings striking statistics—the cost of the first year of war was greater than the expenditures of the entire government from 1791 through 1917—and ample proof of the so-called ratchet effect, by which a government's power never shrinks after a war to the level it was before the war.

But perhaps the final nail in the coffin of the American Republic was the one-two punch of World War II and the Cold War. Strikingly, Pollack's treatment of the growth of the American state during World War II spans fewer than eight pages, and as such he misses interesting details. For example, one of the important contributors to the working group at the Treasury Department that successfully promoted income-tax withholding as a way to increase revenue went on to become a leader of the free-market movement: Milton Friedman. Friedman would note in a 1995 interview that he thought withholding was "a great mistake for peacetime, but in 1941-1943, all of us were concentrating on war." He did not regret his role, but wished that "there were some way of abolishing withholding now." This demonstrates how the exigencies of war overcame an instinctive American anti-statism.

*War, Revenue, and State Building* concludes on a solemn note. Despite the increasingly ingenious efforts to extract resources from its citizens, the American state faces important structural fiscal shortfalls. An infantile polity that clamors

for both tax cuts and increased welfare payments diminishes the prospect of solvency. Even voters who assure pollsters that they seek “less government” in the abstract perennially elect politicians who nurse them with a variety of benefits, only part of which are paid for by taxes.

Meanwhile, a commercialized nationalism thrusts a self-selected few out into the world to sow social virtue abroad while the rest of us go shopping. Belief in self-restraint and republican virtue has all but vanished, as generation after generation of Americans marvel like idiot children at the latest baubles proffered by electronics manufacturers. The American foreign policy establishment prefers that the American taxpayer fund the defenses of Europe, Japan, and a host of other places, rather than allowing foreign governments to do so themselves. As Pollack observes, “the system is financially unsustainable.” And yet, if one had sketched out on paper the predicament America faces today—over-borrowed, overcommitted, and over there—many would have predicted collapse long ago.

Pollack's volume does a service if it succeeds in introducing the broader literature on state building to students of American politics. While the Founders “sought to steer a new course and avoid replicating the European state in North America,” Pollack points out that “the great irony is that the American state they built eventually became more powerful than the mighty states of Europe they so feared and despised.” Those who profess to admire the Founding Fathers and the principles they pursued should consider whether the American state that exists today is worthy of the esteem bestowed upon it. The political scientist Hans Morgenthau wrote, “throughout the nation's history, the national destiny of the United States has been understood in antimilitaristic, libertarian terms.” But perhaps this understanding was wrong all along. Maybe our ultimate destiny was to become what we revolted against in the first place. ■

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## Suicide of the West

*Continued from page 16*

there are inherent limits to what raw physical power can achieve. As European colonialists in Africa discovered, the powerful can change the weak, but not according to their design. (For this we may thank God, for otherwise the nightmare of total control of populations might be implementable.)

Recent events have also shown that the U.S. is not immune to economic laws. By means of the extension of cheap credit resulting in asset inflation, its government has sought to create the illusion of private prosperity while increasing public expenditure. As the emitter of the world's reserve currency, it behaved as if it could accumulate foreign debt forever without in the end losing control of the fate of that currency. During the Cold War, the military doctrine was one of Mutual Assured Destruction; now the U.S. finds itself in the same position vis-à-vis China with regard to the dollar. For the moment, the interests of both countries coincide, but there is no guarantee that this equilibrium will last.

In many respects, then, the United States is not in so different a position from that of Europe. The demographics of its core population are not very different: the natality of the population of European descent is below replacement level. It has a welfare state that can easily be expanded to European levels, and it looks as if this is likely to happen. And if the welfare state reaches European levels in the United States, one of its decisive advantages—its ability to assimilate immigrants—will disappear.

The United States finds itself at a historical conjuncture when its relative power in the world has weakened. To be sure, no decline in power comparable in extent to that of Europe in the 20th century is in view; nevertheless, the realization of this weakening, that the United States is re-entering a world in which it is only *primum inter pares* and not utterly dominant, might cause disappointment to those who see the cup of

power dashed from their lips. Self-hatred and self-denigration might then take hold with disastrous wider effect.

A combination of loss of power and historiographical miserabilism leaves a society in poor condition to maintain its social fabric. On the face of it, the history of the United States is less susceptible to a miserablist interpretation than most countries. But miserablist is never compelled by the evidence alone, and intellectual ingenuity can always descry the cloud in any silver lining. America could be described as a state founded first on genocide and then on slave-owning hypocrisy that subsequently appropriated half of Mexico, etc. Grievance-mongers can project their discontents backwards and easily demonstrate that America has been a paradise for racists, sexists, persecutors of homosexuals, etc. Corruption has always been rife, jobbing politicians have always led the population by the nose. Even the disillusionment that will inevitably follow the euphoria of Mr. Obama's election will be grist to the miserablist mill.

This is not, of course, to call for an opposite historiography in which there is nothing but a glorious upward ascent and everything American is best. One of the dangers of this kind of historiography is that, when disillusionment comes, it is total. And such a disillusionment is particularly strong when the pride in power, with which it is often associated, receives the shock that power has evaporated.

Rather, a defense of all that is best, and of all the achievement, in U.S. history is necessary. That is why the outcome of the so-called culture wars in America is so important to its future. A healthy modern society must know how to remain the same as well as change, to conserve as well as to reform. Europe has changed without knowing how to conserve: that is its tragedy. ■

*Theodore Dalrymple is a retired physician who is the author of Not With a Bang But a Whimper and The New Vichy Syndrome, from which this essay is adapted. Used with permission from Encounter Books.*





# Thoughts for Your Penny?

Sentimental slob that I am, I am a terrible bettor. If I drop by Batavia Downs to watch the horses run, I inevitably blow my dough on a hobbling long shot

starting from the eighth post position. My March Madness brackets are filled with improbable victories by small Catholic colleges and schools from Upstate New York and the Rockies; my Final Four is liable to be Siena, Binghamton, Montana State, and Brigham Young. On Election Day, I predict impossible third-party upsets and dramatic rebukes to the Masters of War. I never win, but then what fun is winning?

So it was found money when I won a pile of “units” in my friend Steve’s annual college football bowl pool. I bet this year like Dick Cheney ordering assassinations: grimly, ruthlessly, without a drop of human feeling. Competence is cold comfort.

Upon receipt of the loot, I consulted my list of Stuff I’ve Wanted to Buy But Never Got Around to It: a poster of “Zabriskie Point” (Antonioni’s ridiculously bad but mesmerizing “youth rebellion” movie), the collected albums of Tom Russell and Townes Van Zandt, a signed Sarah Orne Jewett *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. As the tune goes, I’m not askin’ for much.

My dad is an inveterate collector who is always picking up milk bottles from defunct dairies and old baseball gloves and railroad watches (befitting a New York Central man).

I have inherited the trait, albeit in desultory, sporadic fashion. I collect things for their evocations, their associations: programs and ticket stubs (1960s baseball, local theater, Canadian Football League); postcards (our street in

1910, Sinclair Lewis’s home, 19th-century observatories); badges and banners from local fairs and rallies; hatboxes and shoe horns from the downtown stores of my boyhood; campaign pinbacks from the ones who had a notion, from Hiram Johnson to Norman Mailer.

*In Candy’s room, there are pictures of her heroes on the wall.* Thirty years ago I played that album so hard it skipped every other groove, and if I never got to Candy’s room, well, my walls, too, are plastered with pictures I have collected. Scattered among my daughter’s artwork and family photos on my office walls, these real Americans look down on me, and I up to them: William Jennings Bryan, Gore Vidal, Randy Smith, Eugene V. Debs, George McGovern, Jack Kerouac, Walt Whitman, Batavia Clippers teams of the 1940s, Dorothy Day, Thomas Wolfe, Barber Conable, Al Smith, Burton K. Wheeler, Father Nelson Baker. Overseeing it all is the George Washington portrait by Gilbert Stuart that hung in my mother’s one-room schoolhouse.

If some ungrateful descendant puts the contents of this room on eBay, they won’t fetch enough to cover shipping costs.

My dad collects coins, too, and I remember pressing 1910 and 1912-D Lincoln cents into the blue Whitman folders (using drinking glass bottoms to wedge them in). When my daughter was very young, I did the same with her, and though she hasn’t a half-cent of interest in coins today, she has inherited from

me an affection for scraps and oddities. Like me, she’s reluctant to throw out so much as a used Kleenex.

Coin collecting can be overly methodical, but I like its time-traveling quality. I marvel as I handle, say, an 1832 large cent: this disc was circulated by Americans who actually lived in a republic!

Feeling guilty that I had won this year’s pool by betting against every team in the Mid-American Conference—isn’t betting against Mid-America how our oligarchs got rich?—I decided to convert my winnings into pennies. (Coinwise, I never graduated beyond the penny, or should I say the school of common cents?)

I visited my dealer, John Cooper. John is a Seneca Indian, so he knows about ancestors. I love John’s coin shop, which is on a side street in LeRoy, the birthplace of Jell-O. General Foods, the leviathan that swallowed Jell-O, vamoosed in 1964, so I don’t mind telling you that I’ve heard face-scrunchingly gross tales about the human fluids workers used to flavor America’s dessert.

Then again, my grandfather was a handyman for the First Family of Jell-O, the Woodwards, who in best seigneurial manner paid the doctor bills when employees had children, so thanks, lemon Jell-O and orange Jell-O, for my mother’s duty-free entry into this world.

“Don’t let your possessions possess you” seems inarguably true, but I don’t know: I *am* possessed by certain possessions. They are tokens of the place and traditions to which I belong. I look up from typing this to see a photo of my uncle’s 1950 football team, my daughter’s painting of a bluebird, and a LaFollette for President pin. How do I not belong to them? ■





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